

#54



RAZZORCAKE

YOUNG OFFENDERS



DEAD MILKMEN DEATH CRISIS
DARK AGES

THE LUMBERJACK MORDAM
MUSIC GROUP DEBACLE,
PART II

\$4 US

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Razorcake is a bona fide non-profit music magazine dedicated to supporting independent music culture. All donations, subscriptions, and orders directly from us—regardless of amount—have been essential components to our continued survival.

In this issue is the second and final part of the Lumberjack Mordam Music Group Debacle. *Razorcake*, although never directly affected or in direct contact with the company that distributed—then defaulted payment on—well over a hundred independent labels, thought it was an extremely important story to tell. No other voice in the DIY punk underground examined the situation in any length, even those who were directly involved with LMMG and had much more immediate access to both the labels and the distribution company.

It was an ugly, painful, and depressing scab to pull back. *Razorcake* could have easily been attacked if we approached the situation as a witch hunt. The bedrock of independent music distribution is often a shadowy, intricate process; far more complicated than the “labels are righteous” and “that dude is a scumbag” shenanigans posted on the interweb. It is our hope that *Razorcake* not only shed some light on the complex inner workings of distribution, but have shown current and future labels the warning signs and specific cautions that should be taken when entrusting another with the right to sell their music.

So, why did we do think articles like this are important? Simple. No other publication in the world is telling these stories; stories vital to the long-term health of the DIY punk underground.

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Contact us via www.razorcake.org if you’d like to help out.

Thank you. Oh, crap, I almost forgot. Fuck you, Dale.

—Todd Taylor

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Junk Yards, Thrift Stores, and Steinbeck

I learned this in my tow truck driving days about junk yards: Beyond all the commercials and promises of driving directly into a better tomorrow, nothing is more telling about a machine—after it's been wrecked—than those who are willing to pay to pick it clean. No junk yard in the Los Angeles area will have more than one or two small pickup trucks built through the '90s, no matter how smashed. They're just too valuable, still in high demand, a full decade after automobile manufacturers decided that all pickups needed to become puffed-up, jacked-up gas guzzlers and stopped making small trucks altogether. Reliability, function, and humility once again took a back seat to bigger, faster, and stronger! Recent makes and models are a dime a smashed dozen.

As a child, my father lived through the German blitz of London. My mother was the daughter of working-class Polish immigrants. Our family grew up recycling, re-using, and re-purposing. "Green" reasons were secondary to just not being wasteful, deeply rooted in their childhood memories of not having much of anything. My father is still the most deliberate-chewing, clean-your-plate eater I've ever met. Two of my first words were "garage sale." I couldn't yet pronounce "garage," but we frequently spent weekends meeting our neighbors in their front yards early in the morning and sifting through thrift stores for our clothes and household stuff.

I'm very slow, culturally, and I'm a horrible consumer—"patriot" because I'm not impulsive. Steinbeck's *Once There Was a War* makes sense to buy for a buck at a thrift store that's run by a battered women's shelter. That's the type of entertainment purchasing decision I'm comfortable making. Thrift stores are also where I learn of trends several years after their swell, crest, and crash. I like sifting through the

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of Robert Degen, the father of the "Hokey Pokey."

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"Burn the finish line 'cause I'm not competing."

—The Hidden Spots, "Finish Line,"
Hundred Million Voices

cultural wreckage. Thrift stores are the junk yards of consumer culture. Judging by sheer volume of availability, 'N Sync's neon baseball caps were grossly overproduced. Same goes for any Christmas album or Chuck Mangione record ever made. It's to be expected. That's what a trend is, by definition: A hot burst, a limited shelf life, and, if played right, someone made a shitload of money.

So, when I was skimming through the T-shirts last month, I froze. For the first time an element of the culture I associate with was there en-masse: Youth Brigade shirt, Youth Brigade shirt, Youth Brigade shirt. An entire section of the rack was filled with much of BYO Record's recent shirt catalog, unworn. This wasn't a solitary punk "growing up" or their parents purging shirts, it was 'N Sync all over again: overproduction, overconsumption, and then mass purging.

Then I just started laughing. Laughing because I knew the owners of BYO, the Stern brothers, had signed a distribution contract with Fontana, who's owned by Universal. They got royally hosed on returns when punk became unpopular again and the chain stores started failing. Laughing because they had to destroy tens of thousands of CDs so they couldn't go back into circulation. Laughing because most people won't ever know or care about the fine, but resolute, distinction between crafty DIY punk and the "corporate punk" model that's culturally crashing all around us, like unfixable, rusty oversized trucks in a junk yard. Laughing, because the Sterns had ripped me off recently and seeing all those T-shirts made me feel a little bit better.

Then I stumbled upon Steinbeck's *A Russian Journal* next to a waffle iron for a buck.

It was a good day.

—Todd Taylor

THANK YOU: "Here's an idea that looks like Charlie Brown's shirt. Can you do something like that?" thanks to Lauren Measure from turning bad directions into an awesome cover; Song titles on a whiteboard thanks to Mike Martin for the photo; Watercolor shoegaze goth thanks to Nation Of Amanda for the illo. in Liz O's last column for us. We'll miss you greatly, Liz; Those Keebler elves didn't age well thanks to Ryan Horky for his illo. in Gary's column; Did Ryan Gelatin just invent the first pair of Douglas Fir chaps? thanks for his illo. in Norb's column; 50 horsepower < 1 minute of Chicken parade ruckus thanks to Dan "The Eggman" Egbert for his photo in the Chicken's column; "He didn't seem drunk, but he was acting inappropriately" clown thanks to Bill Pinkel for his illo. in Dale's column; Betty or Veronica? I could never guess right the first time thanks to Danny Martin for his illo. in Nardwuar's interview; Pomp, circumstance, and frosting thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo. in Sean's column; Getting to know your relatives, after they've passed on thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Jim's column; That cow. How can you resist its plaintive eyes, its complex expression? It just doesn't want to be at the show thanks to Justin Telephone, Nina Sabatino, Andy Junk, and Lauren Measure for their help with the Dead Milkmen interview; Fascism with ice cream and occasional public nudity thanks to Matt Average and Donofthedead for their help with the Death Crisis interview; Bones Brigade tattoo and Articles Of Faith T-shirt, mixed with Kansas City rage thanks to Tony Lynch for his Dark Ages photos; "Like the Grateful Dead with alopecia" thanks to Floyd, Mike Martin, Mark Murman, Conner McDonald, Will Kinser, and Lauren Measure for their help with the Young Offenders interview; Solitary bearded man vs. a tsunami thanks to Kiyoshi for his illo. in the LMMG Debacle Part II article; "Hey, man, I'm taking issue with that Refused and Zeke reviews you posted five years ago. You should take them down" thanks to the following reviewers: Kurt Morris, Chris Walter, Kristen K, Dave Williams, Rene Navarro, Jennifer Federico, CT Terry, Jimmy Alvarado, Art Ettinger, MP Johnson, Ryan Leach, DonofthelivingdeadpartII, Vincent Battilana, Joe Evans III, Billups Allen, The Lord Kveldulf, Sean Koepenick, Aphid Peevit, Josh Benke, Reyan Ali, Maddy Tight Pants, Juan Espinosa, Jake Shut, The Rhythm Chicken, Speedway Randy, NL Dewart, Bryan Static, Adrian Salas, Jim Ruland, Keith Rossen, Andrew Flanagan, Stephen Hart, Samantha Beerhouse, Matt Average, Sean Stewart, Jennifer Whiteford, Mike Frame, Craven Rock, and Andy Conway; Megan Pants for playing Moses with the record reviews; Werds misspelled shitbad thanks to Kari Hamanaka, Danny Segura, Jeff Proctor, Adrian Salas, Rene Navarro, and Matt Braun for their proofreading prowess; BB guns kill balloons dead thanks to Chris Baxter for his Photoshopping; Mary-Clare Stevens for her support and a record player in the front room; Matt Braun for his time in the cage against the non-profit grants beast; More technology than we've ever had thanks to Phill Legault for his generous server donation; and all these nice people never have to come in and help, but they do, and the happy-to-be-here pills should have worn off by now thanks to: Adrian Salas, Ever Velasquez, Juan Espinosa, Danny Segura, Samantha Beerhouse, NL Dewart, Rene Navarro, Adrian Chi, and Joe Dana.



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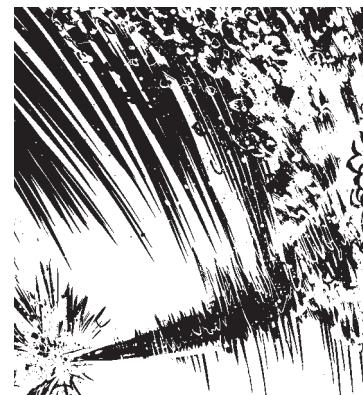
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"In its early days, Perversion was the place to be."

Back to the Old Haunts

Last year, an old friend of mine moved to New York City. The thing that happens when friends move across the country is that, even with e-mail and cell phone deals on cross-country calls, it's not that easy to keep in touch. Over the course of time, our text message documentation of our nights on the town grew less frequent, mostly because I felt awkward about sending him messages about things seen at midnight in L.A. when I knew that he was three hours ahead of me. Phone calls seem weirdly outdated when you can just text someone or leave a message on Facebook or use some other form of communication that doesn't involve awkward pauses. So, for roughly the past year, we had been in touch mostly through a series of Status Updates, remarks that we liked said Status Updates, and quickly typed comments about nothing in particular.

Then I got a message that the new New Yorker was going to be back in L.A. for a brief visit. He wanted to hang out. So did I. For some reason, he wanted to meet up at Perversion.

I have no idea why he wanted to meet up at Perversion, which is perhaps the longest running weekly nightclub in Los Angeles. The last time we were regulars there was almost ten years ago and, back then, the club was starting to feel old. But, it was sort of significant in that it was a place where we once spent many a Thursday night.

In its early days, Perversion was the place to be. I remember its first few weeks as a blur of vivid fragments. The line to get inside would often extend to the corner of Hollywood and La Brea, one large block in length. That's not necessarily normal for brand new clubs. Usually, it takes a while to build up buzz and, if a club is good, you'll see the lines a few months after it opens. Perversion, though, was an immediate success. It was promoted by the crew that put together Helter Skelter, Stigmata, and Velvet, all three of which were incredibly popular in the mid-1990s. More importantly, it was the only club where goth kids could take their non-goth friends.

The club was sectioned off into three genres. The main room was mostly industrial

with a little techno thrown in, things like "Temple of Dreams" from Messiah and "James Brown is Dead" by LA Style that shared some sonic similarities to bands like My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult and KMFDM. The back room played a lot of the big rave songs at the time—"happy hardcore" the style was called—and some '80s hits. That's basically where all the non-goths congregated. In the front of the club, near the entrance, was what we called "The Goth Hallway." It was a long and skinny room that had a set of steps going down to the dance floor (a fact I remember mostly because I ate it while trying to race to the floor to do the cobweb dance to the Siouxsie and the Banshees song "Red Light").

Thursday nights are an incredibly good night for an 18+ club. Many college kids, like my friends and I at that time, don't schedule Friday classes and, those who do, usually only have one post-11 AM course to attend. Thursday nights on college campuses are the official start of the weekend. You can walk through the dorms and hear the parties begin. For those of us who didn't like doing the college party thing, clubs became our ritual and Perversion was the cornerstone. Sure, a lot of us clubbed almost every night, but Perv, as we called it, was the one party that all of us could agree upon weekly. We had carpools heading out from campus, typically with five people crammed into a car, oftentimes with multiple cars trailing each other out to Hollywood from LAX-adjacent. We would always spend a good ten to twenty minutes driving around the neighborhood to find parking that wasn't in a completely shady spot, because no one ever wanted to pay for the lots. Back then, it was five, maybe seven, dollars to park a car under the club. Now, the lot charges twenty. Parking inflation in Los Angeles has been crazy, but that's another story altogether.

On this particular night, I parked in the cheap lot and heard someone holler my name. It was another friend of mine, someone who was part of our club carpool back in college. He decided to come down to Perversion on a whim, mostly because some other hot show that night had filled to capacity by the time he

got down there. We caught up a bit, both in the lot and then inside the club. While we stood on the patio, people watching, he remarked that everyone at the club looked eighteen. It was true; the crowd wasn't large at all, but the group that had gathered looked pretty young, with relatively few wearing the wristbands that mark you as old enough to drink.

"Yeah, but we were eighteen when we started coming here."

You know, back when the club opened, over a decade ago.

Nightclubs are never known for their long lifespan, particularly with weekly parties. Tastes change quickly in the big city and, as I learned during my time working as a DJ, you have to rely on the notion that there will be a new crowd of regulars coming in every few months. If you can keep a club running week after week for a year, you've done a pretty good job. Five years seems an eternity in fleeting nightlife years. Ten years is a damn near impossible feat. That Perversion has lasted almost fifteen years is nothing short of an anomaly.

But the club has changed. A lot. There are only two rooms now, one focused on industrial and the other focused on goth. The days when there were lines around the corner and about 1,200 people packed inside are long gone. The night I was there, maybe 200 people were in the club. That's not a bad number at all, especially when you consider that a lot of the hipper clubs are in such tiny venues where a full house means fifty bodies.

Then there are the kids. Goths and riveteheads look very little like they did back in the '90s. I'm fairly certain I've seen at least a few members of the new spooky crew at anime conventions. There's a definite look that seems to be part *Ghost in the Shell*, part *Dragonball Z*. Think futuristic, militaristic, and with huge blasts of bright colors.

After waiting around for a bit, I finally hooked up with the new New Yorker. We first met years ago, sometime at the end of the '90s, and it's completely possible that we met here at Perversion, though I doubt either of us remembers exactly. Memories



NATION OF AMANDA

It was the only club where goth kids could take their non-goth friends.

of nightclubs inevitably become obscured by the fuzz of really loud music.

We mostly spent the time catching up on things that happened since he left town. There wasn't much in the way of reminiscing, except when the DJ played "Heartbeats" by the Knife. It was a strange moment. We both dig the strange, Swedish electronic band and might have danced to the song if we were somewhere else.

"I can't dance to it here, though," he remarked. My friend had a strangely apt point. Here was a band that didn't exist in 1995, a

band that, fourteen years ago, we couldn't have ever fathomed would not only form, but would become popular. It was something we found long after our gothling days were over and, yet, here it was at a club where the just-out-of-high school set frequents while trying to embrace their inner darkness. If we were at any other goth-leaning club, particularly one that was newer on the club landscape, and heard this song, it would have made sense. Here though, it didn't.

Maybe that's the reason why clubs typically have such short life spans. They

represent an exact moment in time. For me, Perversion will always be frozen in this few-year period at the end of the century, when the goth kids and their raver friends were running wild through Los Angeles, meeting up on Thursday nights at a venue on the then-uncertified Hollywood Boulevard for a few hours of dance floor communion. The club may still be there in name, but the music and the people who made it a party, have almost all changed.

-Liz Ohanesian



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

"There's nowhere I can look in this place and not feel like a voyeur, studying other people's pain."

Dead of the Dead, Part 1: Familia

Nuvia never knew her grandmothers, but their spirits are strong in our house.

On the second day of November, my wife prepares a special breakfast in honor of her grandmother. Adela Meraz Herrera raised three boys and a girl on her own, while her husband was away picking oranges in El Norte. When money was tight, and it was always tight, she would skip meals. One thing she would do to get by was save the leftover tortillas, even those that had gotten hard. Then, early the next morning, she'd break them into pieces and soak them in a bowl of warm milk with cinnamon and sugar until they were soft again. She would eat this for breakfast, like cereal. Avenas de Adela. Adela's corn flakes. A mother's love is forever looking forward.

Nuvia tells me the story while we eat our homemade corn flakes. It is six o'clock in the morning and we are getting ready to leave for Mexico to pay our respects to the dead. Adela is buried in Mexicali, Mexico, one hundred miles east of San Diego. We have an altar to dedicate later this evening, and we won't be going to see her today. So we eat hot corn and sweet milk in honor of the sacrifices she made to keep her family strong.

Before we leave, Nuvia arranges fresh calla lilies, lights a candle, and scatters orange marigold petals on the floor. The flowers mark a trail between the altar and the door. Their scent will guide the spirits of the dead to the bread and water that has been left to nourish them on their journey back to the underworld.

It's been a long time since we've traveled these roads. In the months leading up to our wedding in Ensenada, we went to Mexico every other weekend. We were married in a vineyard in El Valle de Guadalupe, which is about ten miles northeast of Ensenada. We'd typically cross into Mexico through TJ and come back through Tecate, as many of Nuvia's relatives live there, including her paternal grandfather Tobias Soto Herrera. Today we are taking him to the cemetery in Tecate to pay respect to his mother, Nuvia's great grandmother, Cesaria Soto Herrera. It's been two-and-a-half years since the wedding and we've scarcely been back because of all the drug violence. Driving the winding roads through Rancho San Diego, Dulzura, and Jamul brings back happy memories.

The border between Mexico and United States regulates the flow of flesh between the two countries, but the spirits cross at will.

Our vehicle is selected for inspection. The Mexican official tells my wife to open the trunk, which she does without getting out of the car. He takes a look inside and tells us we can go. The whole thing lasts under a minute. We drive off and proceed west down Avenida Revolucion. We pass taco shops, auto garages, daycare facilities, and liquor stores—all with hand-painted signs. We turn right on Calle Ensenada into a residential neighborhood and take a left on Calle 18. Tecate is a city of hills and the houses either cling precariously to hillsides or huddle in the gullies. Stray dogs navigate the pitted streets. We park outside a community center patrolled by a portly policeman with a dusty shotgun. Nuvia's grandfather lives in a small house across the street.

Tobias's wife operates a snack bar out of a decrepit-looking shed in the front yard, but there are no customers today and the candy shop stands empty. Nuvia's grandfather's house sits in the shadow of much larger house painted the same color, so they look connected but aren't. A pit bull hiding under a pick-up truck parked in the shadow of a lemon tree comes charging out at us and is jerked back by a length of chain. Things that would look out of place elsewhere seem at home here: an oil barrel trash can, a dog kennel shanty, a set of cement stairs that lead to nowhere. Pale toys litter the roof of a neighbor's house, the color bleached out of the plastic by the too-bright sun.

Nuvia's grandfather is a man of few words. Today he wears black loafers, a blue sweater, and a baseball cap with the Hecho en Mexico logo. He doesn't walk much and when he does he uses a cane. He finishes his oatmeal and announces that he's ready to pay his respects.

Every city in Mexico has a Boulevard Benito Juarez. This one takes us past the store where Nuvia's parents used to take her to buy shoes, the bus station with the staticky public address system that sounds like a trombone, and the panaderia with the best bread in Tecate. In Mexico, stop signs are posted farther back from the corner than American drivers are accustomed, and Nuvia

is constantly braking sharply, even though she's driven the length of Baja and back. We go through the roundabout and pass the entrance to the border line. We take a left up the hill toward the cemetery, but the street is blocked. We circle back and follow a woman to her Explorer, parked across the street from a Modelorama, which is exactly what it sounds like: a beer store.

We unload the flowers we bought wholesale in Carlsbad through a friend whose father was a rose grower. We pay nine American dollars for three loaves of bread: one to leave, one to take with us, and one to eat. Many of the loaves are cut in half and wrapped in plastic like sandwiches in a cafeteria to display their fillings: guava, pineapple, fig. The traditional round loaves are called pan de muerto, bread of the dead, and are marked with a cross and dusted with sugar or sesame seeds.

An old woman sells tamales out of a pot. A mother and daughter sell aqua fresca from jugs set up on a card table. People mill about, striking deals with the florists. I take a deep breath from the bucket of marigolds I'm carrying and follow my wife's grandfather into the cemetery.

The cemetery is built into a dusty hill that runs all the way to the border. The plots are crammed together. There is no set line to mark where one grave ends and another begins. Some are humble, others ostentatious. Several plots are covered in marble and some of these are enclosed in wrought iron fences and some of these have roofs so that they resemble tiny chapels. Everything is whitewashed or painted in muted pastels and faded earth tones. The cemetery's chaotic sprawl makes it impossible to walk in a straight line and I nearly stumble into an open grave.

Nuvia's great-grandmother's grave sits three-quarters of the way up the hill. We set up a camp stool for her grandfather and he watches as Nuvia arranges the flowers and lights the candles. The sun climbs higher and a higher and the cold morning gives way to a hot day. I stand behind the marker in the shade of a slender cottonwood. Nuvia asks her grandfather questions about her great-grandmother and writes down what he says in a notebook.

People pick their way through the plots with care, carrying flowers and wreaths.



JACKIE RUSTED

The border between Mexico and United States regulates the flow of flesh between the two countries, but the spirits cross at will.

Old men and boys bear mops and brushes and buckets to scrub the graves of dust and dirt that the wind has brought and the sun has hardened.

My wife sends me back to the car for a special candle inscribed with a prayer whose significance is lost on me. The candle bears an image depicting a human hand with the stigmata. Winged angel heads float in the background. I stop at the juice stand to buy something to drink and practice my terrible Spanish. I purchase a cup of jamaica with a \$5 bill. The women struggle with the change, and I don't realize until much later that they've given me too much.

Walking back, a young girl calls out to me, asking if she can help clean the grave. "No, gracias," I say as I pass. "No, gracias," one of them shouts back, mimicking my deep voice. Another squeaks out a "thank you" in a much higher register. I turn and smile and we all laugh.

I watch a family of mourners move through the cemetery like a centipede. As they make their way to the grave, a man-sized boy roughhouses with his relatives. He starts with his uncle, who playfully hits him on the head with an empty water jug. Undeterred, he turns to his mother, and snaps her on the arm with a rubber band while she isn't looking. The lady doesn't like this at all, and punches the kid in the chest and slaps him several times with her beefy hands. The kid doesn't protest, doesn't run, he just takes it and drifts away. I look down at the ground, but there's nowhere I can look in this place and not feel like a voyeur, studying other people's pain.

An hour goes by and Nuvia's grandfather wants to go visit the grave of his brother, who passed away in April. We gather up our things and head east, but for whatever reason, he can't find the plot. Maybe it's the heat, the bright sun, the choking dust. Maybe

it's music drifting through the cemetery stirring old memories. The last time Nuvia's grandfather was here, he came as a mourner. One can't be expected to pay attention to such things in such a state. The world just falls away.

Nuvia's grandfather wanders about the plots, lost and confused, looking forward and back to days the dead still walked and the day when he no longer will. Does he wonder if his name will fade from the marker and be forgotten, like so many others in his vast city of the dead?

He needn't worry. The spirit of his wife and mother are strong in his granddaughter. Every year she pays tribute to her family with flowers and bread and water. She may not have known these women in life, but she's on intimate terms with their spirits. She understands the purpose of this day is to welcome back those who have passed on and nourish them with our memories so that those who touch our lives are always with us.

-Jim Ruland



"Chernovetsky would prove his sanity by demonstrating feats of physical strength."

To Kiev Mayor, Public Speedo Proves Mental Health

If you're someone like me, or if you are me, when you read the headline, "Kiev Mayor Strips Down to His Speedo in Public to Prove He Is Not Crazy," you think three things: 1.) America is an inferior country, 2.) The Ukraine is a superior country, and 3.) I need to cancel all plans for the next twenty-four hours to research this matter. (Fortunately, the only plan that needed to be "cancelled" involved listening to the Magic Kids record.)

And so, it is with the greatest delight that I present to you Leonid Chernovetsky, Kiev mayor, mega-church member, photographer, singer, and cat lover!

Chernovetsky's biography includes all the necessary elements for a successful Eastern European leader: childhood disobedience, a general lack of Soviet-era success (a status also known as failure), followed by sudden wealth in the chaos of the early 1990s.

In his autobiography, *Mayor's Confessions*, he writes, "I've finished school without any significant achievements (however I took part in math competitions) mainly because I argued a lot with most of the teachers."

He explains on his personal website that school was particularly difficult "because I've always had my special view on things and never recognized anyone as an authority."

Sadly, Chernovetsky was not able to cultivate his "special view on things" until later in life. First, he worked at an aviation factory, but later made a logical transition, becoming a lawyer and a banker. After the fall of the Soviet Union, he made a lot of money—fast—and wrote a book about it, appropriately titled *How to Become a Millionaire*.

In keeping with a tradition shared by Slavic leaders, rap stars, and founders of religious cults, he demonstrated his wealth through the purchase of luxury vehicles.

"Fifteen years ago, I could not even imagine that I would have a posh collection

of Mercedes cars," he wrote on his website. "There are lots of miracles in life."

Indeed!

And, in keeping with another Eastern European tradition, Chernovetsky once killed a man by running him over in his car, following in the footsteps of Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin. ("He was an idiot," Putin said, of the unfortunate victim. "He wanted to die.")

When Chernovetsky decided to run for mayor of Kiev in 2006, no one really paid much attention to him. While other candidates organized high-profile campaigns, what did Chernovetsky do?

Simple. He passed out food to the poor and elderly and provided free medical services, in what he describes as "an act of charity," sometimes even delivering food directly to apartment buildings. His critics chose a slightly different word to describe his selfless offerings—namely, bribery.

Here's the thing: For the most part, an Eastern European politician who complains about an opponent's corruption is just annoyed because his own bribery efforts have failed. "Food? That's all we needed to do? Give out some food? Pay for some appendectomies? And I wasted my money on complicated Nigerian wire transfer schemes? Shit!"

Once he won the election, Chernovetsky didn't waste any time taking his "special view of things" to the masses! He fired the director of the Kiev Zoo after he failed to find a female mate for a male elephant. On holidays, he sends out holiday greetings to the animals and apparently embarked on his own efforts to find a sexually appealing mate for the elephant. (Sadly, my research has not uncovered whether or not he was successful. If anyone reading this happens to be a scholar of Slavic elephant breeding, please contact me with additional information.)

He sent out bibles to members of Parliament after converting to the Embassy of God, a Pentecostal church led by an

African immigrant. The church condemns kissing before marriage, in stark contrast to prevailing Eastern European standards, which condemn *not* kissing as many people as possible, preferably strangers on trains while drunk. And, oddly enough (or not), Chernovetsky once offered to sell his own kisses in a state-run lottery. Hypocrite!

He has also been known to state about the Virgin Mary: "What does she look like? I guarantee you that she looks like a Kievan, like a Ukrainian babushka. As for the Jesus Christ, here, with a 100% probability, it's a Kievan dedushka (grandfather)."

He continued, "Yes, I'm a cosmonaut, an absolutely real one. Everything I invented—it will all be implemented. You already see many changes, the most important thing is psychological change."

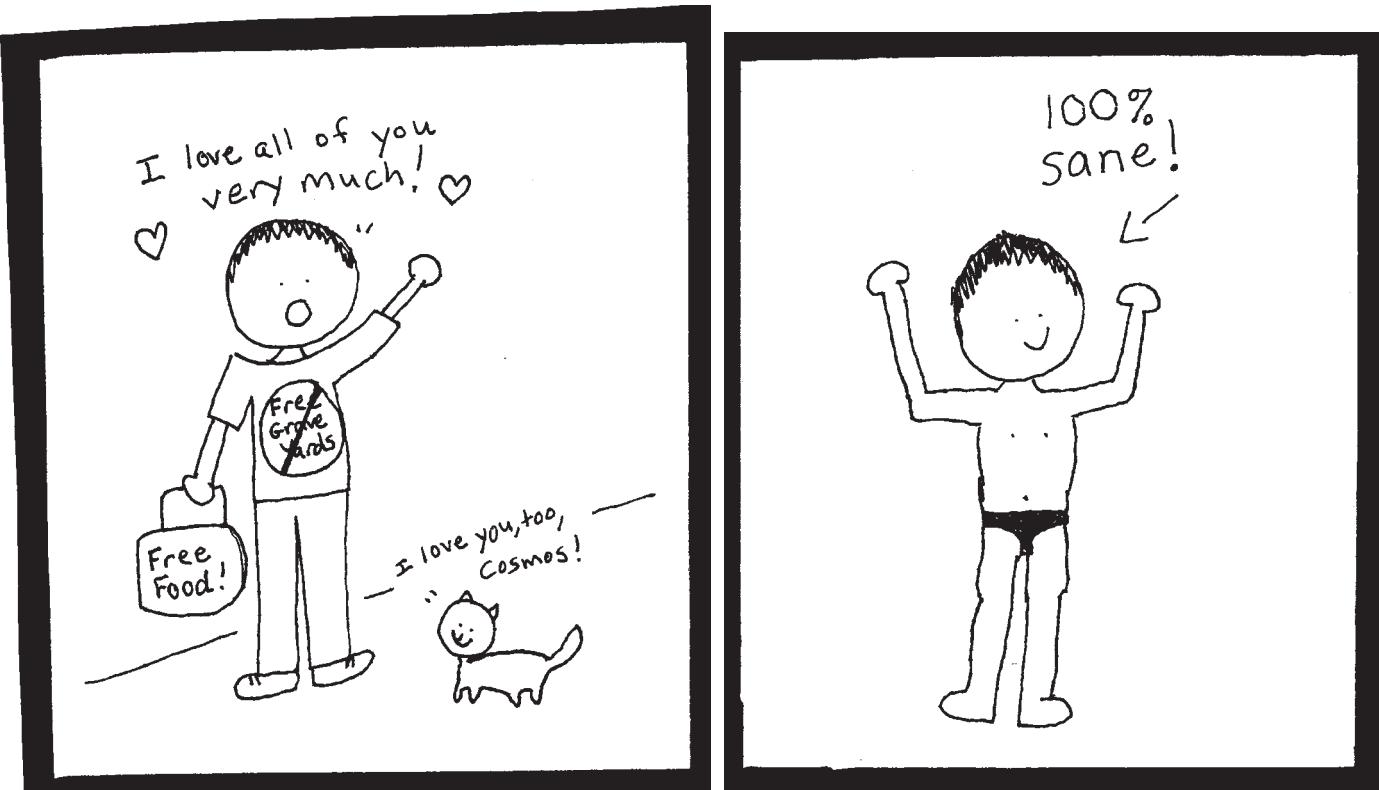
He set up a personal website where you can make a "donation to charity" in exchange for an autographed photo, a copy of one of his "private letters," or one of his wilderness photographs (a personal hobby).

He considers himself a passionate artist, breaking into song at every opportunity, including some occasions that might not seem, upon first glance, to be opportunities, including government meetings and anti-corruption protests.

Chernovetsky explained the genesis of his artistic talent at a recent protest: "The communists, members of the Komsomol, buried my grandfather Stepan Honcharov alive in Siberia in 1926, because he had not given them his last grain of wheat. These were the difficult times. And he, I do not even know where he was buried, was singing a song before his death."

He did not reveal the name of the song his grandfather was singing, but a candy-loving reporter has since conclusively proven that the song was the old hit (now long forgotten), "Please Stop Burying Me Alive."

After sharing his family anecdote, he then sang "A Pair of Bay Horses," a romantic



Chernovetsky considers himself a passionate artist, breaking into song at every opportunity, including government meetings and anti-corruption protests.

gypsy-themed ballad, to his supporters, before concluding his presentation by shouting, "I love all of you very much. Tell me at last that you love me!"

Earlier this year, Chernovetsky released a CD featuring covers of popular 1980s Soviet hits. The New York Times quotes Ukraine's Renaissance man as saying, "Who sings better than me? Nobody does, besides God."

Apparently, some Kiev residents must love him, or at least are willing to receive food in exchange for their vote, for Chernovetsky won re-election last year. His opponent? Ukraine's heavyweight boxing champion, Vitali Klitschko, who was unable to achieve electoral victory despite receiving the public endorsement of 9/11 hero Rudy Giuliani. (Seriously.)

But in the weeks after the election, some voters questioned their decision. Newspapers reported that several elderly residents tried to return their free food in protest after the mayor's behavior became even more bizarre, earning him the nickname "Cosmos."

After he proposed levying a tax against air conditioners and charging an admission fee to the city's communal graveyard, a parliamentary committee took action and demanded that Cosmos submit to a psychiatric evaluation.

Chernovetsky refused. Instead, he said, he would prove his sanity by demonstrating feats of physical strength. A few days later, he appeared at a local swimming pool, dressed only in a Speedo, where he flexed his muscles in front of a crowd of reporters before running 400 meters, completing fifteen pull-ups, and swimming around the pool.

"I want the whole Ukraine to know that I am physically and psychologically healthy," Leonid Chernovetsky told *Pravda* while standing, dripping wet, in the locker room. "I ran, did pull-ups and I swam to wash away the dirt from Ukraine—the dirt which Ukrainian irresponsible politicians pour down on my motherland."

Case closed!

As of press time, it appears government officials have been unsuccessful in their efforts to force Chernovetsky to undergo more traditional tests of sanity. And so, in the meantime, the mayor is free to devote his time to serving his constituency—and posting information about his pet cat Yasha on his website: "I love my cat so much that I set his portrait as wallpaper on my mobile phone. I always give Yasha's photos to my friends, make photos of him by myself, print and sign them as postcards—'From Chernovetsky with love!'"

How could a man of such depth and talent be insane? Surely, it is impossible! Cosmos, I give you my full support! And now if you'll excuse me, I have some "charitable contributions" to make.

—Maddy

MY THIRTY-EIGHTH COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT

I WAS SO GLAD TO GET
TO RETURN TO G-VILLE
FOR THE FEST 8!

2009
FEST AWARDS
-AKA-
THE "FESTIES"

BEST BAND - FRIDAY
WAS TOO MANY DAVES!



BEST BAND - SATURDAY
WAS TOTALLY SNUFF!

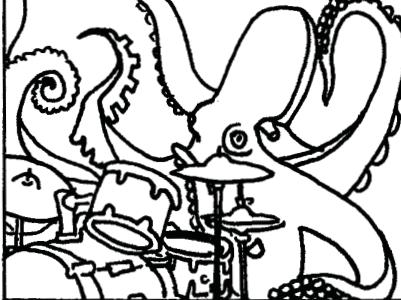
I HATE THIS GIANT VENUE,
I HATE THESE BOUNCERS,
I HATE THIS PART OF FEST,
BUT I LOVE SNUFF!!



BEST BAND - SUNDAY
WAS THE FLESHIES!!
YEEEEEEAAAAAH!



BEST SURPRISE WAS
STYMIC'S NEW DRUMMER.
HOLY FUCK!



HARDEST PARTIER
EASILY GOES TO PUGS
FROM SWANSEA.



BEST VENUE WAS
DURTY NELLY'S. MOST OF
THE BARTENDERS WERE
EVEN POLITE!



BEST PARTY WOULD HAVE
TO BE THE CRAZY RIOT
ON SATURDAY NIGHT!



BIGGEST BUMMER GOES
TO THE COMMON GROUNDS
BOUNCER FOR RUINING
THE END OF TILTWHHEEL



THIS YEARS LIFETIME
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
GOES TO P.J. FANCHER
FOR ALWAYS BEING A
GREAT HOST!



WHAT A GREAT TIME I
HAD SEEING ALL MY OLD
(+NEW) FRIENDS! I'M FEST!



SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!
WILL THERE BE A NEXT
YEAR?



MY STUPID LIFE

BY
MITCH CLEM
WATERCOLORS BY
NATION OF AMANDA



I'VE WORKED A STRING OF DEAD-END SERVICE INDUSTRY JOBS SINCE BEFORE I WAS LEGALLY OLD ENOUGH TO DO SO.

I'VE WORKED NEARLY EVERY POSITION AT NEARLY EVERY SHITTY JOB YOU CAN IMAGINE.

SO TODAY I THOUGHT I'D SHARE WITH YOU A FEW...

SECRETS OF THE SERVICE INDUSTRY

FIRST OFF, YES, HORRIBLE THINGS CAN AND WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR FOOD WHEN YOU'RE RUDE TO THE WAIT STAFF.



THE PEOPLE AT THE VIDEO STORE ARE FULLY AWARE WHICH MOVIE YOU'RE JUST RENTING TO JERK OFF TO.



IF YOU'RE A DICK TO THE BARISTA, SHE WILL SECRETLY GIVE YOU DECAF.



THE SIGN IN THE FAST FOOD RESTROOM HAS NEVER MADE ANYONE WASH THEIR HANDS WHO OTHERWISE WOULDNT.



THE COMPUTER REPAIR TECHS LOOK THROUGH YOUR PERSONAL FILES. AND I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT WORD DOCUMENTS.



THE DRIVE-UP BANK TELLERS JOKE ABOUT YOUR BALANCE.



AND DON'T KID YOURSELF: THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE COUNTER AT THE PORN SHOP JUDGE YOU MORE THAN ANYONE YOU'VE EVER KNOWN:



AT THIS POINT, I CAN ONLY ASSUME YOUR DOCTOR IS EVEN LESS COMFORTABLE WITH HAVING TO TOUCH YOUR GROSS, NAKED BODY THAN YOU ARE.





“Hangovers can be prevented.”

FUTURE MERRY OLD ELF?

By the time this is in print, we should all be saying hello to 2010 and I should be knee-deep in whatever short-lived resolutions I've decided would change my life for the better. I would like you all to know that I have enrolled in a beginning guitar class, and I hope to have that Model T running sometime this year. This is my one chance to be teary eyed, sentimental, or just plain soft. This year has been pretty eye-opening in terms of the subtlety of life, what with the marriage of friends, the passing of loved ones, and the birth of new generations. In talking to me, one would think I let these things go as trivial, but I do watch and I do bask in their timely significant glory.

I was playing golf with the best man at my wedding recently and was taken by how even though our meetings are few now, we still act like a couple of knuckleheads who see one another on a frequent basis. Another friend, who is somewhat confined to Texas, calls every few weeks to discuss sports, my insistent ability to resist technological advances in the listening of music, and philosophical endeavors that would only have righteous meaning to us. I'm not sure if this is some sort of advanced age physiology or that thing they call a mid-life crisis, but I tend to give credibility to the on goings a little bit more than I used to.

Now, I want you all to know this by no means is going to change me into a merry old elf. Oh no. Just like a New Year's resolution, it probably won't last, so get your monies worth, while you can. No sir, I don't see an overnight remedy to my bitching and moaning, whining and crying, or the upturned lip. Give me at least another twenty years. Even then, I could be even more crotchety at that point.

I'm actually looking forward to seeing more of my friends this December, once I get this college monkey off my back. Things have been going pretty good, except one little one-and-a-half unit class that has no book and an instructor who changes stuff up weekly. (See, I told you all the bitching wouldn't stop over night.)

For some unknown reason, something happens in December that brings people together more than any other time of the year. It must be like going to confession. The more people you make contact with in December makes up for all the time one should have taken at various other times of

the year, and that makes everything all right. I get Christmas cards from people I thought I lost contact with during the holiday and it makes me feel a little guilty.

This isn't to say that I haven't tried to stay in contact—it's just that this e-mail thing drives me crazy. Someone will send me an e-mail saying they've changed accounts. So, I send off a short paragraph and then I wait weeks that turn into months, and I get back computer silence. Because of e-mail, I have less and less telephone numbers and personal contact numbers so I can't dial up a friend or send them a letter. Then, starting around the second week of December, my mailbox gets fatter and fatter every day with the guilt of all my acquaintances. How is it they have my address? Am I so predictable that they know to send a letter to a guy who never leaves his house? I hope that's not it.

I would like to take this chance to say I'm sorry to all of you if my silence slights you. It's not my intention; I'm just not much of a multi-tasker. I would like to take this opportunity to say thanks for sticking with me for so long and I would like to express the hope that you all get a big chunk of what you want in the upcoming year. God bless you all. You know who you are.

SNAKE PIT 2008

\$??, By Ben Snakepit

When books from Snakepit arrive, I have to schedule a chunk of time to read them. I feel that the titles should be *A Year in the Life...* or *Follow My Life*. It's wonderful to watch the rollercoaster ride that is the life of Ben Snakepit. I always wonder whether he reads these things and says to himself "Did I really do that?" Hangovers can be prevented. I do wish I had the time to count and see if the dog or the girlfriend got more panels. It is also remarkable how one can see himself/herself as a piece of shit playing video games. This little book is a beautiful reminder of how complex life can be in our simple, daily routines, from work, to playing in a band, or even how the flu can throw a wrench in things. Despite all the things life throws at us, we still have people who love us and animals that depend on us, to prove our lives are important. I would, however, like to know why page sixty-one is glued into the book, and is mine the only copy. Hey, where's my prize? (Microcosm Publishing, 222 S. Rogers St., Bloomington, IN 47404, microcosmpublishing.com)

MUTANT #0

\$ Free, Compilation

I absolutely love compilation books and this one is filled with some of my favorite writers: Noah Van Sciver, Julia Wertz, and, of course—my all-time favorite—Brian Ralph who sent the best book ever, *Cave In*. The great thing about compilations is the variation in stories. Some are fun, some funny, others are bizarre in a nonsense way, while others are so vile one just turns the page. I feel this is the best way to view a creator's medium. It's like listening to a comp album; if there's something you like, you search for material by that artist. There is the in-your-face comedy of "Fart Party" and the adventures of any of Brian Ralph's stories. There is the thought-provoking title, "The Family," by James Williams, that leaves the reader trying to figure out the workings of this particular family unit. This book collects chosen works by some of the best indie writers out there and, if you can't find something to like in here, then you're just too mainstream. Go get a copy of *Superman*. (Atomic Book Company, 3620 Falls Rd., Baltimore, MD 21211, benn@atomicbooks.com)

BUZZPOP #2

\$4.00 U.S., By Matt Chicorel

Buzzpop is totally cool! The artwork in this book is awesome: real clean lines. The story gets kind of muddled because it stops and starts in-between some really great concert art. I feel that if the story was complete and all the artwork was at the end, this book could sell to a larger audience. It's the story of a kid who finds some cool science gadgets at a yard sale and then incorporates them into this superhero outfit. He is then taken seriously by a detective. It's fun to watch it unfold. I really wish this book had a solid story line, because that's all that's missing. It touches on the introduction of other characters, but falls short when it breaks up and comes back to the same starting point with a slightly skewed point of view. I still think *Buzzpop*, with all its great visuals, can be a contender. (Night Light Comics, PO Box 511788 Milwaukee, WI 53203 nightlightcomics@yahoo.com)

THE FART PARTY VOL. 2

\$??, By Julia Wertz

I'm always glad to see an author of a book—who seems to be dangling on the fringe—living



RYAN HORKY

**Starting around
the second week of December,
my mailbox gets fatter and fatter
every day with the guilt of all my
acquaintances.**

far enough away from Southern California. This one has me laughing because it's the same comedy that dances in everyone's thoughts, but now it's in print. Of course, I love the panel of telling the boss, "I quit," and, after the euphoria is gone, the reality takes over. It's always better to commiserate when you know others have the same demon dancing in their head. This must be therapeutic; to get it out of the mind and into the panels of a comic book. For the most part, I tend to shy away from the "This is my life in comics" books, but this author has a way of making light of the misfortunes that haunt her. One never really feels sorrow for the sneaky devil. I had a lot of fun reading this book, and I'm not just saying that because the author seems to have bloody, cut-you-up tendencies. (Atomic Book Company, 3620 Falls Rd., Baltimore, MD 21211 atomicbookcompany.com, fartparty.org)

THE FAMOUS HAIRDOS OF POPULAR MUSIC VOL. 2

\$ 3.00 U.S., By ?

Volume 1 was James Brown. Volume 2 is Diana Ross. Neither are good. I was watching a PBS special on Ed Sullivan and they had a clip on Diana Ross. Not even that hairdo could help this book. A photocopy of a hairdo with drawings of faces done by first graders is the only way to describe this waste of paper. Sorry, I just don't get it.

(Lemon O Books, PO Box 11872, Milwaukee, WI 53211, thefamoushairdosofpopularmusic.blogspot.com)

OGNER STUMP

\$4.00 U.S., By Andrew Goldfarb

This is what a comic drawn by Dali would look like! I love this comic. It's the second time Goldfarb has run something by us and his

work seems to get better every time. The color in this book is, simply put, "fascinating." It takes the reader into a swampy fantasy world where strange creatures seem to accommodate your every strange, warped need. The surreal world spins in and out of control. Vines and water are all-encompassing. There are three amazing stories and one hex in this book, sure to delight any of us kids from the Saturday afternoon Elvira generation. Also, at the end, is some amazing poster art from shows of the Slow Poisoner, the one-man surrealistic rock and roll band. Boy, would I like to get my hands on some of that artwork. Sheer genius! This is by far my favorite for 2009. (Rocktopus Books, ognerstump.com)

-Gary Hornberger



POWER POP POLICE

REV. NORB

**"I DO NOT HAVE
A PLAN, AND I'M
DRESSED LIKE
A DIPSHIT."**

YOU WITH THE PACIFIER! REJOICE!

*"Books are good." "Parading's better."
—conversation between Ringo Starr and
Paul McCartney's very clean grandfather;
"A Hard Day's Night"*

A few years ago, a fellow columnist opined that playing in parades was measurably more punk than playing gigs in stinky VFW halls. And, whilst the eminent punkness of a stinky VFW should ever remain beyond reproach, parades do provide a certain atmosphere of tongue-in-cheek momentousness that lends itself nicely to acts of hijinx on a scale far more epic than can generally be perpetrated in the back room of Post #1138 and the like ((where the acts of wanton hijinx are usually limited to molesting the Bingo board or something)). The intersection of the Venn diagram of "PUNK" and "PARADE" is a pretty limited one, to my knowledge; The first punk-parade throwdown of which i'm aware occurred sometime in the 90's, where bunny-headed Sacramento punk troublemakers the L'il Bunnies ((allegedly)) merged their vehicle, unbidden, into the thick of a local Easter parade. The second punk-parade convergence of which i am aware was the well-documented rampage of the ((also bunny-headed)) Rhythm Chicken, whom, unlike the L'il Bunnies, was actually a legit part of said parade ((the reason that BUNNY HEADS == PARADE MATERIAL in the eyes of society is left as an exercise for the reader, though you've got to wonder why there haven't been any giant Nobunny balloon sightings at the Macy's parade yet)). The third punk-parade event of which i can think—and the first to not involve bunny heads—was Beach Patrol ((with special guest vocalist Reverend Me)) performing on the Fox Cityz Foxz Roller Derby league float at the Oshkosh Holiday Parade last year. By virtue of being the Foxz announcer, i am occasionally asked to tag along in an Official Capacity at events such as these, so i showed up about ten minutes before the parade was set to start, whereupon the band decided they should learn "Don't Believe In Christmas" by the Sonics and i should sing it, which we kind of did ((our improvised attempt of "Run Run Rudolph" was markedly less successful since i could only remember the line about the doll that pisses itself)). For the next hour, we were towed thru the streets of downtown Oshkosh on the back of a flatbed truck, mouths and fingers numb, a swarm of rollergirls skating alongside us, while we played "Don't Believe

in Christmas" ((of which i could only remember maybe three verses)) over and over and over again to a crowd standing in the midst of downtown Oshkosh's effusion of holiday decor. *PUNK!* So, yeah—you can't really pull off a caper of that magnitude at the local VFW ((although i suppose you could try to learn "Don't Believe in VFW's" by the Sonics ten minutes before the show)), which would tend to support the theory that PARADIN' > VFW, one supposes. *HOWEVER!* Successfully hijinxful paradin' comes with one important caveat, and said caveat is this: *If you are gonna be in a parade, you NEED to have a PLAN OF PARADE HIJINX*—a basic outline of the tomfoolery you intend to wreak, and a general concept of how said tomfoolery will be implemented. If you are a band wearing bunny heads, you don't need much of a plan; if you're just kinda hangin' out, you definitely need to get your shit together beforehand. So anyway, this year i get the call the day before the Green Bay Holiday Parade. *Do i wanna be on the float?* Sure, i rarely have exciting orgies or grand prix races scheduled for Saturday mornings, and, in the immortal words of Naven Johnson, *this is the kind of spontaneous publicity that MAKES people!* The theme for the float is "Rollerbabes in Toyland." I am unclear why this is an important piece of information, but it apparently means that all the skaters are going to have big keys coming out of their back, so they look like windup roller derby human toys, which is, of course, a very clear and logical visual reference that everybody will get ((cough)). The next morning, i go downtown and look for our float. I'm wearing the same marching band jacket and Grand Poobah hat that i wore during last year's "Don't Believe In Christmas" marathon, but i have popped the horns off of the Poobah hat in hopes that i will look kinda like a tin soldier or something. I also have a pair of striped pajama pants that i've tucked into some red rubber boots that i bought to go with my red Lt. Uhura "don't call it a fuck me dress" fuck me dress that i used to wear on stage when i was young and beautiful and could get away with wearing red Lt. Uhura fuck me dresses in public. Some of our skaters have a bunch of huge plastic candy canes with them, so i borrow one to use in lieu of a gun. *THEY CAN HAVE MY CANDY CANE WHEN THEY PRY IT OUT OF MY COLD, DEAD FINGERS!!!* There is no band on the Foxz float this year,—there is, instead,

a rather prosaic assortment of wiggy Yuletide debris, including, but not limited to, presents, a Christmas tree, two big toy soldiers made out of empty Mountain Dew 12-packs, and some kinda white fabric that is supposed to evoke a merry snowfulness, but instead just makes it almost impossible to walk on the float without slipping. The deal is that the skaters will be zooming around the float on the street, handing out candy ((it is expressly forbidden to toss candy into the crowd during the Green Bay Holiday Parade. It's also illegal to have anyone dressed as Santa Claus on your float, unless you are the One True Santa Claus as designated by the powers-that-be. Strangely, red Lt. Uhura fuck me dresses are as yet unregulated)), while me and a couple injured players stand on the float amidst the toy soldiers made out of old Mountain Dew 12-packs and wave to the crowd. Suddenly, i am gripped by the icy clutch of realization: I HAVE NO PLAN. *"Wave to the crowd?"* Where's the fucking glory in THAT??? I'm REVEREND FUCKING NORB!!! I DON'T WAVE TO NO GODDAMN CROWDS ((unless, of course, said wave is a frantic hand signal meaning "OHMYFUCKINGGOD I AM STRANGLING TO DEATH IN MY PURPLE FUCKING ZENTAI SUIT SOMEBODY FIND THE FUCKING ZIPPER AND GET THIS PURPLE SHINY SHEATH O' DOOM OFF OF ME!!!"))!!! *Whom do i look like, John F. Kennedy???* *And what good did THAT do him, anyway???* I need me a schtick, stat! I mean, dressing up like a half-assed toy soldier in an outfit pieced together from your weird clothes lying around your bedroom floor MIGHT be VAGUELY interesting in the context of a punk show. Dressing up like a half-assed toy soldier is NOT AT ALL interesting, however, in the context of a holiday parade—where, for all i know, there are fully-assed toy soldiers with functioning rifles on some float that ISN'T made out of old Mountain Dew 12-packs up ahead. I DO NOT HAVE A PLAN, AND I'M DRESSED LIKE A DIPSHIT. I try marching, stiff-leggedly, past our Christmas tree. Maybe it will be funny that i am guarding the Christmas tree armed with only a candy cane. It is not. I practice acting like i am shooting into the crowd with my candy cane rifle. It seems a little too Alice Cooper for my tastes. Time is ticking. I have no plan. I've got my girlfriend's lipstick in one of my red rubber boots ((the team had been using it to make

weird circles on their cheeks, causing them to look like a pack of retarded hookers, which i'm sure was the desired effect)). Perhaps, unknown to the team, i'll scrawl a really mindblowing message on the side of one of the presents on the back of the float, and, as we pass, people will be stunned by the sheer brilliance and subversive, life-changing irreverence of it all. I mean, *i'm Reverend Nørb! Lusty parade veteran!* I should CERTAINLY be able to think of a brilliant, subversive, life-changingly irreverent secret message to scrawl, shouldn't i??? I stare at the blankly gift-wrapped present for ten minutes. Eventually, pressed for time, the best life-changingly irreverent message of which i can think is "SECRET MESSAGE," which i scrawl across the present in a dark burgundy smear that is virtually unreadable anyway ((in case you're scoring at home, YES, i thought of "Welcome to the world of AIDS" but figured i really needed to scrawl that on a mirror for full effect. In the cold, hard light of further analysis, i guess i would've opted for "YOU HAVE JUST BEEN PASSED BY A HAPPENING," which is what the Ohio Express had painted on the back of their van circa "Beg, Borrow and Steal," which means nothing to anybody but at least serves to convince me that i haven't lost my touch)). I am consumed with the blue fumes of self-loathing. I, Reverend Nørb, am about to be hauled thru the streets of downtown Green Bay, surrounded by retarded hookers on rollerskates, AND I CAN'T THINK OF ONE GODDAMNED COOL THING TO DO. *The tragedy! The humanity! The lack of columnar materiality!* I'm over the hill. I'm off the game. I'm done. Cashed. Finished. Washed up. *I'll never work in this town again, at least not in a parade capacity!* The float begins to inch forward, just ahead of the Green Bay East High School marching band. The injured skaters up on the float with me begin waving, to no one in particular. I'm sunk. Well, what the hell was i SUPPOSED to do on a Christmas float featuring toy soldiers constructed from old Mountain Dew 12-packs? I don't have much to work with here! What was i supposed to do, start pointing at people and yelling "REJOICE!!!"? ((GASP!)) Ding! The lightbulb alights! I jump to attention, brandishing my oversized candy cane as the Penguin would brandish a bumbershoot. "YOU!" i yell, pointing at some hapless bystander on the sidewalk, "REJOICE!" I point at another helpless onlooker. "YOU IN THE BLUE! REJOICE!!!" I spin from side to side, not wishing either side of the street to be spared from my clarion call to arms! "YOU IN THE SUNGLASSES!!! REJOICE!!! YOU WITH THE PACIFIER!!! REJOICE!!!". The crowd, as commanded, rejoices. Yelling "REJOICE!!!" off the float at random onlookers turns out to be a completely valid application of Parade Tomfoolery! The day is saved! My reputation remains unblemished! Hijinx WILL ensue this day!!! I HAVE SAVED CHRISTMAS.

REJOICE!!!
—Nørb

If you are
gonna be in
a parade,



you NEED to have a
**PLAN OF
PARADE HIJINX**

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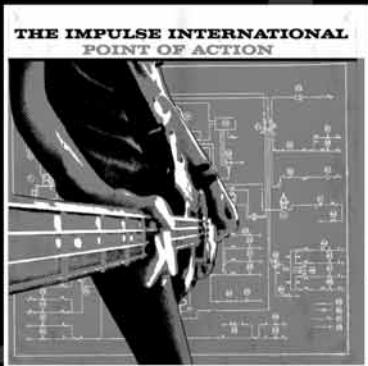
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CHICO SIMIO

"WORLD OF WARCRAFT
BLUES"

ART
F

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PRISON BLUES" BY JOHNNY CASH.



CLICK... CLICK... CLICK...



CLICK... CLICK... CLICK...

I FEEL LEVEL 80 COMIN', IT'S
ROLLING ROUND THE BEND, AND
I AIN'T SEEN THE SUNSHINE
SINCE I DON'T KNOW WHEN, I'M
STUCK IN WORLD OF WARCRAFT
PRISON, AND TIME KEEPS
WASTIN' ON. BUT THAT EPIC
GEAR KEEPS CALLIN', AND I KEEP
GRINDIN' ON.

WHEN I WAS A YOUNG MAN, I
PLAYED VIDEO GAMES A TON,
ALWAYS SPENT MY MONEY,
BUT I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS
FUN. NOW I KILL NIGHT ELVES
AND GOBLINS JUST TO WATCH
THEM DIE, WHEN I SEE WHAT
MY LIFE HAS BECOME, I HANG
MY HEAD AND CRY.



SOB...



"The front grill of the truck displayed a board which plainly read TAKE YOUR CLOTHES OFF!"

Genetically Engineered Maritime-Parade Ruckus Reruns!

The Dinghole Reports
By The Rhythm Chicken
(Commentary by Francis Funyuns)
[Edited by Dr. Sicnarf]

It was about twelve years ago. I was twisting and shimmying a refrigerator-sized bass cabinet into a van outside of Chicago's Fireside Bowl. I almost heard it before I felt it. *KRR-R-R-AAA-AACK-CK!* For the first time in my life, I threw out my back. The next few days were painful and slow, but I never missed a day of work. A few years later, I was hunched over, holding up a two-hundred-pound mixing bowl full of Swedish pancake mix, pouring it into buckets for storage. Once again, out it went. Another painful number of days followed. Since then, I've had other various bouts with back pain.

A few weeks ago, I suddenly and inexplicably had lightning bolts of mind-searing pain shooting down my right leg. I was rushed to the hospital and thrust into the MRI tube. It felt so Star Trek! I had a very herniated disc, which was putting pressure on my sciatic nerve, subjecting me to near pass-out pain. I was shaking from the pain. Now I'm rather bedridden and get weekly epidural shots between my fourth and fifth vertebrae. I missed the local premiere showing of *Feed the Fish*, a major film shot right here in Door County, WI. I missed the Packer/49er game at Lambeau Field the next day. Two days later, I missed the Jesus Lizard show in Milwaukee. The next morning I missed my flight to Las Vegas. I missed Thanksgiving dinner in Boulder City and the Cedar City vacation that followed. Now I'm somewhat bedridden in my Northwoods trailer, an irate hasenpfeffer just stewing in my own juices.

(What? You want some CHEESE with that whine? –F.F.)

[Some cheese CURDS, perhaps? You know you're not exactly the spring chicken you once were. –Dr. S.]

(Does this mean you have no ruckus to report? –F.F.)

You may be aware of my particular fondness for performing in parades. By performing in

parades, one is not bound by the conventional restraints of predictable rock shows. The entire normal rock show formula is thrown out. No sound system, no cover charge, no opening bands, no merch whoring, no cops shutting down the show. Instead, normal everyday schmucks and a few punker-types alike are treated to a rolling display of ruckus and lunacy, right between the various business floats and the Shriners' little cars! I have been celebrating this mode of ruckus dispersal for years now.

(ANOTHER parade report? Seriously, Chicken. I'm afraid your bag of moldy birdseed has run dry. –F.F.)

[I guess this means you're already over that whole "maritime-punk" shtick, eh? –Dr. S.]

If you've been keeping up with my last few Dinghole Reports, then you are aware of my new campaign to bring my ruckus to the open water. What better way to completely blindside your audience than to arrive from a direction they never deemed fathomable? When you're a mile offshore and sunbathing out on the poop deck, who would seriously expect a traveling rock show to arrive? Just watch the cops TRY to get me out there! The Coast Guard is totally unprepared for such antics! Maritime travel and maritime gigs are truly the next frontier in punk rock!

(Great. More "Dingy Reports" from Captain Rhythm-Pants. –F.F.)

[Excuse me, Rhythm Chicken, but haven't you already exhausted enough pages in this magazine covering these questionable new tactics of yours? –Dr. S.]

Well, always on the hunt to bring you exciting new forms of dimension-warping ruckus, we here at Ruckus Laboratories have formulated an even better strategy in bringing our wacky hi-jinx to the public. We have taken the remarkable and outlandish qualities of the parade performance and combined them with the shocking audacity of the maritime gig. These two stellar rock show formats have been violently combined and loaded into

a totally new conceptual canon....THE TOUR RE-ENACTMENT!

(Just when I thought your birdbrain ideas couldn't get worse. –F.F.)

[I must say, Chicken, once again you've really hit bottom. –Dr. S.]

Dinghole Report #111: Genetically Engineered Maritime-Parade Ruckus Reruns!

(Rhythm Chicken sighting #456)

I only played one parade the entire summer and early fall, and it was down in Milwaukee. The local folks up here have come to expect my appearance in almost every parade and give me guff when I don't. By late fall, I felt it was time to remind Door County that the Rhythm Chicken is indeed alive and well! Once again, the last big festival weekend, Fall Fest, was upon us. My quiet little town of Sister Bay was overrun by thousands of tourists staggering around and swilling beer like it was their last festival in this lifetime. Of course, my favorite event at Fall Fest is the parade!

I wanted to really crank the bizzaro-knob for this one. I decided to pay tribute to my most successful recent tour, the Dream Bone Maritime Tour! (See Dinghole Reports, issue #52.) I was able to wrangle the exact boat from that tour, the magnificent Dream Boat, and the trailer to pull it. Ruckus Kevin was able to sit in as himself, and then my official photographer, Dan "the Eggman" Eggert, sat in, portraying Dr. Phil. They both wore their motorcycle helmets and rode in the boat with me. We were about to re-enact the greatest maritime tour of the summer... IN A PARADE!

My Chickenkit was tightly crammed in the back of the boat. Kevin and Dan were in their motorcycle helmets with an air horn up in the front seats. Ruckus O'Reily was way up front, driving the truck. The front grill of the truck displayed a board which plainly read *TAKE YOUR CLOTHES OFF!* The fifty horsepower Johnson outboard motor had the remnants of a Hamm's box taped to its sides. We were ready, very ready.



DAN "THE EGGMAN" EGBERT

Really, though, how hard is it to excite a drunken crowd with a chicken playing drums in the back of a boat in a parade?

As we inched into the parade, the crowd already saw us coming and started to cheer our arrival. We rolled around the corner between Husby's and the Sister Bay Bowl, the two main bars. The largest crowd of the entire parade route was there, and they simply ROARED! I rocked my ruckus, rocking the boat, rocking the parade, rocking the festival. Between every dose of crazy backwoods rhythm I would dish out, Kevin would hold up the air horn and let'er rip! The crowds totally ATE IT UP. Really, though, how hard is it to excite a drunken crowd with a chicken playing drums in the back of a boat in a parade?

There were those in the crowd who actually witnessed the REAL Dream Bone Maritime Tour, and they yelled the loudest! Beers were brought up to the boat! Children screamed! Ladies yelled! Horns wailed! The excitement was intense, but done rather quickly. Sister Bay is a small town, and the

parade route is only about five blocks. We finished up, packed things away, and then strolled back to the festival. There, in the middle of the main intersection, was the main stage. The Happy Schnapps Combo was playing the stage for the thousands of festival-goers filling the main drag. They played "Blatz and Sauerkraut," to which I raised my Pabst tallboy and let out a *whoot!* I love Fall Fest!

(So does a re-enactment of a Rhythm Chicken tour even count as a Rhythm Chicken sighting? Can Cheap Trick RE-ENACT their previous shows? -F.F.)

[Okay, Mr. Chicken. If you really want to follow through with this re-enactment hoosh-wash, you should re-enact the parade re-enactment of the Dream Bone Maritime Tour.... ON HORSESHOE ISLAND!!! -Dr. S.]

(A parade of boats perhaps? A rhythm regatta? -F.F.)

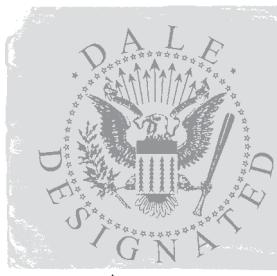
[A re-enactment rhythm regatta? -Dr. S.]

Soooooooooooo, here I am, bedridden in my Northwoods trailer. I've been stuck in this bed for almost two weeks now. Every now and then, a deer or a couple turkeys run across my yard. An occasional car or truck will drive by out front and honk. It is now officially the off-season up here and Sister Bay is a ghost town. I could be back in the Las Vegas area, but I'm sitting here stuck in my bed, watching turkeys cross my yard.

Viva Sister Bay.

-Rhythm Chicken
rhythmchicken@hotmail.com





I'M AGAINST IT
DESIGNATED DALE

"Upright monkey see, upright monkey do."

The Next Shift in Humanity

Through the ages, we human beings have been impacted largely by the people, places, and things surrounding us. They can have a profound effect on the way we carry ourselves and how we carry on with others. Upright monkey see, upright monkey do. For the most part, I like to think the human race has come some way from what it used to be. Notice I said "some way" and not the more commonly-quoted "We've come a long way," because it's obvious there's some long, windy road we've yet to travel when it comes to dealing with one another. This goes for the whole planet we all inhabit.

If you're the slightest bit familiar with U.S. history, stop and think about how things have gradually changed in the last sixty to

those three common denominators. Is it possible those hell-bent on these three key ingredients, leading a swath of shit through opposing sides, are focused on these things from the womb, or are they just a product of their environment? Maybe it's a little bit of both, like a bad seed just waiting to be turned extremist by his fellow rotten apples, or like a single cancer cell just aching to be switched on to begin its deadly blitzkrieg of annihilation.

Yes, progress has and will continue to be dealt with like a hand of poker. Some go all in and reap considerable rewards; some fold and refuse to take any chances; and the rest go apeshit berserker and lose their heads—and asses—completely. You can have all the

from head to toe. He quietly disappeared into the store and came back to the long counter of registers by us with a pint-size bottle of orange juice. Completely cutting off the line of people, he walked up to the counter and tried to hand the cashier the bottle to get rung up. The cashier, an older Armenian woman, pointed over his shoulder and loudly started in on him that he's supposed to get in line. All the sudden, Homey broke his silence with, "*I HAVE MONEY! I'M PAYING YOU FOR IT RIGHT NOW!*" The cashier wasn't having it, so with a parting "*FUCK YOU!*" he fast-balled the bottle at her head, which barely missed her face and slammed into the wall behind her. He then turned around, storming off past us to the door he came in at.

I'll go on record one hundred percent that I enjoy fucking with people who I know for my own (and others) entertainment.

seventy years (well, depending on exactly what part of the country you happen to live in, that is). No more segregated public places, a more attuned understanding of mixed-race relationships, a better understanding of same-sex relationships, a huge increase of women in the workplace—these few examples would have never even been entertained in simple conversation some sixty years ago. Yet, look at the progress men and women have made since then. It's awesome. And like him or not, who back then would have ever thought a mixed-race president would be sitting in the Oval Office as we speak? It's all pretty gnarly, and in a good way, if you ask me.

Over time, most of this progress has been beneficial to the human race. It's what challenges us and makes us strive to be better—not only to benefit those of us in the present, but to hopefully benefit those in the future who are taking over the next shift in humanity, passing the torch of *Keep On Keepin' On*, if you will. There are those who still have a distorted view of what defines progress. Usually that view ends up in a horrible struggle, conflict, or war, boiling down to three key ingredients: power, money, and religion.

Every war, notable and not-so-bookmarked, has been based on one of

strategy in the world, but some things just aren't meant to be.

I sometimes wonder why people are the way they are, what makes them tick. Now, don't be mistaken—I'm the last one to go around picking people's heads apart or giving my half-assed analysis on people's characteristics, but I'll go on record one hundred percent that I enjoy fucking with people who I know for my own (and others) entertainment. Sorry, it's who I am. (Hey, why am I apologizing?) Anyhow, watching total strangers' different reactions to different situations has always been interesting in the sense of just "how far" we humans have actually come. Some can be funny, and some can be downright disappointing.

About a year ago, Yvonne and I were at a CVS drugstore to get some prints done up at the self-serve photo kiosk. While getting our disc uploaded, I noticed a decked-out clown, complete with makeup and red rubber nose, come strolling in through the entrance near us. He looked almost identical to Homey D. Clown from that old *In Living Color* show. (YouTube him if you've never seen it. Those were some damn funny skits.) Homey came rolling by us with one of those wire grandma carts with the big rear wheels, yet he didn't appear hobo-ish one bit. He was rather clean

Now, anyone who really knows an old Armenian woman knows that you don't pull this kind of shit with her. And, sure enough, she came out from behind the counter running after him with her cell phone in hand. Tailing his ass and cussing at him as he was exiting, she was also on the phone with the police, telling the officer on the other end what just happened between her eruptions of obscenities aimed at Homey. As soon as Clueless The Clown saw she was right behind him, he double-timed it and took off across the boulevard, cart rattling in front of him, with the cashier standing in the middle of the intersection, yelling "*YOU SON OF A BITCH!*"

We laughed our asses off all the way home. The weird part was that the clown didn't look at all homeless, so why this kind of surly clown outburst? Was he late to a children's party and didn't have time to wait in line with the rest of the customers? Were Homey's DTs kicking in something so fierce that he had to get his screwdrivers assembled pronto so he could get his much-needed sip on? I don't know, but I do know this: He picked the wrong lady to fuck with that afternoon, and he's lucky he didn't end up with a hairpin stuck in his clown sack.

Yvonne and I live very close to one of

the largest shopping gallerias in Southern California. From the day after Thanksgiving to Christmas Eve, our neighborhood is a virtual clusterfuck of an anthill every single weekend. We have our own parking at home, so we're good, but the street is a whole other sticky ball of wax. On one side of our street, there are signs posted the entire block that read "NO PARKING EXCEPT FRIDAY FROM 8AM TO 10AM." Pretty simple, right? But when you first glance up at it, it appears to say that you *can't* park on that side of the street from 8 to 10, so people think they're in the clear to park, especially once they've had enough of hopelessly trying to find a spot in the mall parking structure. Yeah, they're willing to hoof it all the way in and back with bags of crap in tow.

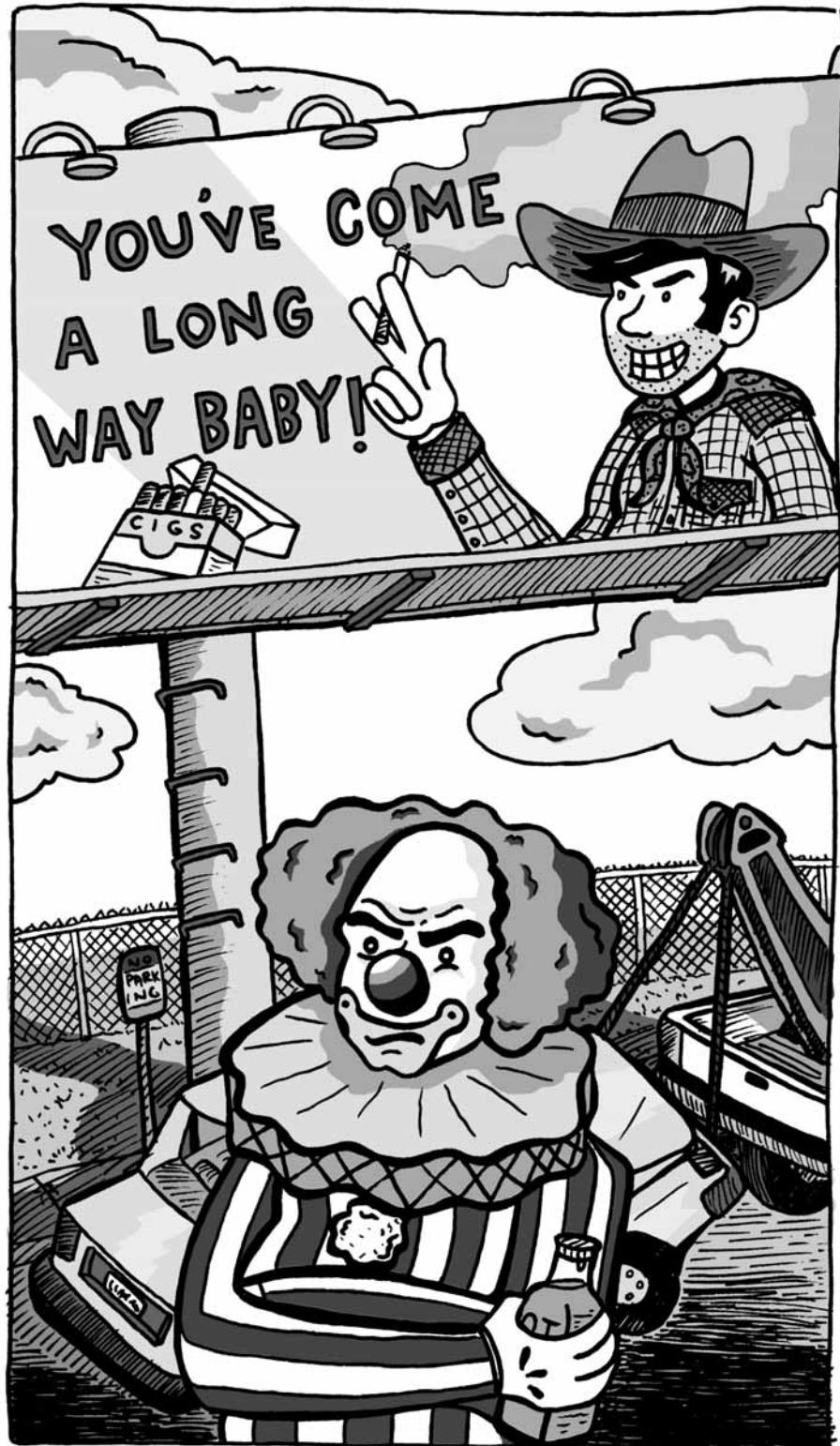
I honestly can't count how many times I've given people a heads-up during that time of year that they'll definitely get ticketed for parking on that particular side of the street (It went up \$10.00 this year to \$50.00 bucks a citation). The city parking officers make a killing on our block and all the blocks surrounding us that time of the year, *always*. Most of the unaware people do a double-take at the signs and thank me for saving them a ticket. Some like to be fucking hard-headed and try to argue about the signs with me (to which I laugh and walk away), and there are even a few that have said, "Thanks for the heads-up, but I have no choice but to park here. I'll take my chances."

Is holiday shopping really that über-important for one's existence? Three syllables, people: in-ter-net. During this time of the year, I'll sometimes sit by our front window and stare with amazement at the people who get into full-blown road rage over parking spots. It's like watching bad television. I'm not even kidding.

One of the more extreme situations went down a couple years ago during the Christmas feeding frenzy. I was at my desk upstairs by the window, balancing my checkbook. I heard a sharp skid, someone laying on their horn for almost a full minute, and then a pair of guys starting to unleash a flood of cussing at one another, the bellowing getting louder and louder. I glanced out the window. One guy hurriedly backed into a street spot while another guy was furious that he got assed out as he was approaching the same spot from behind. Neither guy was budging at all.

Families with their kids walking by on the sidewalks sped up, becoming scared that they didn't want to be near what was escalating into a full-blown brawl. Before either one of the numbnut drivers could swing at each other, I yelled down from the window, "Hey, guys! Please! Stop for a second!" They looked around, and then up at my window. "What? What the fuck do you want!?" I yelled back down, "Look up at the sign you're both trying to park near. That's what I want!" They do, and then...silence.

I quickly decided to be some rational, jive-ass Jiminy Cricket, an overly nice-toned prick because of their rude interruption: "You're so busy being angry that you're trying to park in a spot that no one's supposed to be parking in to begin with! Come on,



BILL PINKEL

"you guys, it's Christmas!" I almost started laughing out loud after the "It's Christmas" comment, but I stifled myself. The two goofs actually started apologizing to each other, shaking hands, and mumbling to each other before getting into their cars and splitting. 'Tis the season, indeed.

I know that holiday stress can get to people, but if you're about to go to blows over something like a parking spot, maybe you need to find a new kind of

holiday, perhaps one that doesn't blind you with rage.

An old cigarette ad used to say, "You've come a long way, baby!"

Shows what the tobacco company knows. We've got quite a ways to go.

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—Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com



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BY KIYOSHI NAKAZAWA ♥

CUT THIS COMIC OUT, PUT IN YOUR WALLET AND USE AS PROTECTION FOR WHEN YOU GET LUCKY.

HELLO LADIES I'M
ROMEO REALITYCHECK
VALENTINES IS THE
BEST DAY OF THE
YEAR BUT FOR SOME
REASON I ALWAYS
GET MY HEART
BROKEN.



OUCH! THAT HURTS!
WHY DO THE WORDS
"NEVER CONTACT ME
AGAIN." ECHO IN MY
EARS? IF I'M NOT SUP-
POSED TO BE TAKEN
BY YOUR FEMININE
CHARMS THEN STOP
MAKING EYE CONTACT
WITH ME.



IF YOU DON'T WANT
ME TO ASK YOU OUT
MAYBE YOU SHOULD
MAKE YOURSELF
UGLY.



MAYBE I'LL STOP CALLING
ON THE PHONE IF YOU
QUIT SHAVING YOUR
ARM PITS + BRUSHING
YOUR TEETH AND
GROW A MUSTACHE.



MAYBE I'LL STOP SEND-
ING YOU DESPERATE
E-MAILS IF YOU
STOP SUGGESTING
ANATOMY UNDER-
NEATH YOUR CLOTHES.



MAYBE I'LL STOP BEING
SO ATTRACTED TO YOU
IF YOU WERE A
TRAN.



MAYBE I'LL STOP
FOLLOWING YOU
AROUND TOWN IF
YOU STOPPED
TELEPATHICALLY
TELLING ME TO

I THINK REALLY
OPEN COMMUNICATION
IS WHAT MAKES
A RELATIONSHIP.
JUST KIDDING, THE
GRE



12/09

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READING IT BUT
SPIDER-MAN
IS ONE OF THE
BEST COMICS
OF
ALL TIME



WHO ARE YOU?

"Nardwuar: Who are you?
Daniel: I don't know. It's hard to tell."

Nardwuar The Human Serviette

Daniel Johnston

Nardwuar: Who are you?

Daniel: I don't know. It's hard to tell.

Nardwuar: You are Daniel.

Daniel: Yeah, I've heard that. That must be me.

Nardwuar: Daniel Johnston!

Daniel: That's right.

Nardwuar: Welcome to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, Daniel Johnston.

Daniel: Thank you very much.

Nardwuar: I have a gift for you right off the bat from the Vancouver band, Cub. Here it is, their 7" *Betti Cola*. [Nardwuar pulls out a 7"]

Daniel: Ah, that looks good! That looks pretty good!

Nardwuar: With cover art by Dan DeCarlo.

Daniel: Ah, no kidding man. That is cool. He's great. I love those. I buy those *Archie* comics a lot. [looking at the 7"] Those girls look so foxy. I always buy 'em.

Nardwuar: And you know what's really amazing about it—and I have another gift for you—is they actually cover on their CD, "Tell Me Now" by Daniel Johnston!

Daniel: Oh, no way. I love that. This is great!

Nardwuar: And they're from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. What do you think about that, getting Dan DeCarlo?

Daniel: Yeah, he's cool. I mean those girls look like real foxes and babes on the *Archie* comics.

Nardwuar: And they have some great lyrics too, Daniel. One of them is "Satan sucks, but you're the best."

Daniel: [Surprised] Oh my.

Nardwuar: Now, here we are in Vancouver, home of Boris Karloff. He grew up here.

Daniel: I think I met him. One night we were at a pizza shop. And I left a slice, and he was looking at the slice on the table and I said, "Are you Boris Karloff?" But it couldn't have been, you know, he's been dead for so long, I guess. But it seemed like it was really him. It was weird.

Nardwuar: He did work at Vancouver at the Pacific National Exhibition. And I have another gift for you. Check this out: this is The Beatles playing in Vancouver at Empire Stadium in Vancouver. [Nardwuar pulls out a poster]

Daniel: That is so cool. Thanks so much. That's going on my wall.

Nardwuar: I guess that's what I was wondering about. I was looking at the movie

The Devil and Daniel Johnston and I saw this [Nardwuar pulls out a record] on your Christmas tree, *The Beatles American Tour with Ed Rudy*.

Daniel: Oh yeah, uh-huh.

Nardwuar: Can you tell the people about hanging *Ed Rudy* on your Christmas tree—this is like a spoken word record—the spoken word Beatles thing.

Daniel: It was a freaky Christmas that year. Can I have this, too?

Nardwuar: That maybe isn't quite for you. Some of the interviews are actually on the CD I gave you, though. But speaking of the Beatles, did you once leave a whole bunch of tapes for Yoko Ono?

Daniel: Yeah, I went to Yoko's house and no reply. [laughs]

Nardwuar: You left some tapes?

Daniel: Sure, I did. Some shirts and stuff.

Nardwuar: This *Guitar Hero* thing that's happening. Kurt Cobain wearing a Daniel Johnston shirt in *Guitar Hero*. What do you think about that? Do you get any cyber-royalties for that?

Daniel: Well, you know about that title *Daniel and the Devil*... what is it? *The Devil and Daniel*? Man, that's hardcore. That's got me tattooed for the rest of my life. It couldn't be worse.

Nardwuar: How about the *Guitar Hero* video game; you know the *Guitar Hero* video game has...

Daniel: They're starting a video game with the characters that I draw and stuff.

Nardwuar: Well, the *Guitar Hero* video game has Kurt wearing your T-shirt and Kurt in that video game sings some Bon Jovi.

Daniel: Oh, cool. Kirk, Star Trek actually sings Bon Jovi?

Nardwuar: Yes, Kurt sings some Bon Jovi in *Guitar Hero*.

Daniel: That sounds great.

Nardwuar: Daniel, you also worked at Astroworld in Houston, Texas.

Daniel: That's right. The place of no return.

Nardwuar: That place looked incredible. But now it's gone?

Daniel: Yeah, I dunno why they closed down. It was a big, really cool place.

Nardwuar: It had the Alpine Sleigh! And it had, like, an echo chamber in it? And it got really cold? What was Astroworld like? You saw A Flock Of Seagulls there?

Daniel: Yeah, and I played football with them before the show even.

Nardwuar: You played football with A Flock Of Seagulls? What an image that is!

Daniel: Yeah. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Were they any good?

Daniel: Oh, they were great. They had that "and I ran... I ran so far away" song.

Nardwuar: Now, from football, Flock Of Seagulls, to working in an oil refinery with a girl, what was that like, working at the oil refinery with a girl?

Daniel: Well, there were girls at the oil refinery, so it made it kind of fun to joke around and stuff. But, like, the other day when I tried... you know, you can't harass girls too much—like I get, I've gotten in trouble a few times with the stewardesses, and, you know, I leave the girls alone. I don't bother them as much. [laughs] I used to have fun with the stewardess—"Can you get me *another* drink?"—something like that. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Daniel Johnston, is your artwork still on the walls of your high school?

Daniel: I dunno about that. But I'm in the yearbook, and stuff, and I painted a bear. It took me all year to paint. They wanted me to paint this bear. Our symbol was a bear and I painted it, and it took me like all year, and I just didn't go to classes and everything, and the next year they painted over it. [laughs]

Nardwuar: What's the first punk band that you saw, Daniel Johnston?

Daniel: Well, I saw The Clash. I saw Elvis Costello in the day. Some good shows there in Pittsburgh.

Nardwuar: I was wondering, Daniel Johnston, what role did this gentleman here have in your life? [Nardwuar pulls out an LP] Here we have Mr. Kim Fowley.

Daniel: All right! This is cool. I never... he wanted to do a record with me, you know, and I told him, "Sorry." Then I said, "Yeah," and he said he wanted to see what I sounded like in the studio and I could do some studio recording. When I did, I thought to myself, "Hey, I'll go ahead and record an album." *Continued Story* was the album, but I never really met him. I'd like to work with him some day. He did stuff like Joan Jett and "Cherry Bomb." All right.

Nardwuar: Also, I was wondering Daniel Johnston, you've got a song about record



Daniel: Those girls look like real foXes and babes on the Archie comics.

DANNY MARTIN

recording on your new LP, don't you? About records, about record stores.

Daniel: Yes, I do.

Nardwuar: What's that song about?

Daniel: Well, it's about fake music. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Faux music, Daniel Johnston. On eBay recently there was a test pressing, a Daniel Johnston Jad Fair test pressing for \$5,000.

Daniel: Oh man, that is unreal.

Nardwuar: Do you have any of those you could put on eBay?

Daniel: I really enjoyed that first album we did, and we did plan to get together sometime.

Nardwuar: Daniel Johnston, you were on MTV's *Cutting Edge*. One person that doesn't get a lot of credit is the host of the show. What can you tell the people about Peter Zaremba from The Fleshtones. [Nardwuar pulls out a Fleshtones 7"] He was the host. Do you remember him?

Daniel: Oh yeah, he was so cool.

Nardwuar: Yeah, The Fleshtones. I love The Fleshtones.

Daniel: He got me on the show. I just showed up there, grabbed my lunch, y'know, and we were all eating tacos, and I held up my tape to the camera, and smooth sailing. I was famous. MTV.

Nardwuar: You're talking about MTV, but it comes back to The Fleshtones, Peter Zaremba.

Daniel: Yeah, I heard it. I really liked the music. I've heard them before a little bit. Oh, can I have this? Probably not.

Nardwuar: Yes, that's for you.

Daniel: Thanks. I appreciate it. That'd be great.

Nardwuar: Daniel Johnston, at one time, did you almost have Lou Reed on one of your records?

Daniel: Well, that's another one that just... was almost a brush with greatness. He was there a couple days in between when I was recording and I missed him, but Mojo, Mo Tucker, was there, and we wrote a song for her.

Nardwuar: But you almost had Mo Tucker and Lou Reed on a Daniel Johnston record.

Daniel: It would have been cool.

Nardwuar: But you did have Willie Nelson's sister on one of your records.

Daniel: Yeah, that's true. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Willie Nelson's sister!

Daniel: It's true. Hey, do you have some more comics for me?

Nardwuar: And, also, we have a gentleman with you here, Brett. Could we bring over Brett for a moment to do a song for us? You said you could do a song for us. I wanted you to do the song "Tell Me Now," but you haven't been doing that recently, have you? That would be in honor of the band Cub.

Daniel: I don't really remember it.

Nardwuar: Daniel, here we are with Brett.

Daniel: Hi, Brett.

Brett: Hi, Daniel.

Nardwuar: And you had a tune for us?

Daniel: We sure do. This is an old one, a song from *Songs of Pain* era.

[Daniel sings "Grievances" with Brett on guitar]

Nardwuar: Daniel Johnston, amazing, live at the Comic Shop in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Daniel: You know it.

Nardwuar: With Brett as well.

Brett: Thank you very much for having us.

Daniel: Yup, an old friend from college. We went to college together.

Nardwuar: Anything else you want to add to the people out there at all, Daniel Johnston?

Daniel: Hmm, I dunno. Anything to add to the people? I dunno. They used to say "Power to the people." I dunno.

Brett: Right on.

Daniel: Power. [laughs]

Nardwuar: Well, thanks so much Daniel and Brett and keep on rocking in the free world and doot doola doot doo...

Daniel: Yeah, Kathmandu.

Nardwuar: Almost... Doot doola doot doo ...

Daniel: Uh, doot doo.

Nardwuar: Yeah!

Daniel: Right, okay. Thank you. Thank you very much. Hey, I really did pretty well with all this loot!

To hear and see this whole interview please visit www.nardwuar.com



RAZORCAKE 27



A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

"All economic forecasts show that taking money from higher education makes things worse."

PORTABLE DOOM

Rain poured down, filling ditches and flooding the concrete quad with about an inch of water. I sat in the portable that was designated as faculty offices. It was Friday morning, one of my favorite times to teach a college class. Colleges and universities are about half empty on Friday mornings. It feels like the edge of Spring Break every week. I half-listened to the rain and half-read through my class notes and tried to remind myself that I would be a college professor for the next three hours and I should act like one. That's when I heard the crash.

I couldn't place it. It sounded like a wrecking ball smacking into the side of a building, but where would a wrecking ball come from on this rainy Friday morning? I raced outside the faculty offices and had a look around. My portable was one of eight that surrounded this flooded concrete quad. The rain paddled against the inch-deep pond, jetted out of rain gutters, formed little streams in the ditches. No one was around to race out of any of the other portables and look at me so I could look back at them and shrug my shoulders and at least acknowledge that I too had heard a crash and we hadn't been imagining things. Alone there on the west end of campus, I did what I could. I grabbed my umbrella, walked over to the portable where I'd be teaching, unlocked it, and had a look around. Everything seemed in order. I left, leaving the door unlocked so that my students wouldn't have to wait out in the rain.

I went back to sitting on my broken office chair, half-listening to the rain, half-reading my class notes.

At break time, I went back to my desk in the faculty portable and ate an orange. Another professor was there by this time. He said, "Did you hear about the air conditioner?"

I couldn't make sense of this. Air conditioner? It was February in Los Angeles. Who talked about air conditioners? I shook my head.

He said, "An air conditioner fell through the roof of number six this morning."

"What?"

"Yeah," he said. "I guess the gutter got clogged, the roof filled up with rain, and everything came crashing down. Crazy, huh?"

"Crazy," I said, knowing that I'd have to spend the next hour-and-a-half in portable number five, right next door. I left the faculty offices and stood in the quad in

front of number five, trying to see where the rain gutters were and if they were clogged, trying to find the air conditioner on the flat roof, seeing nothing but the rain and the same dusky brown portable I'd been teaching in for a semester and a half. The umbrella kept my head dry. My Doc Martens kept my feet more or less dry. The rain smacked the back of my legs, though, sticking my jeans to the skin on my calves.

For about a minute, I thought about canceling the second half of class and waiting until the next Friday to see if the roof would hold on this forty-year-old portable. But I didn't. I decided, all of this may come crashing down someday, and I'll be under it or I won't. In the meantime, all I could do was all I could do, which, on this morning, was teach composition to the youth of East L.A. who were trying to claw their way into the middle class.

I taught the second half of the class on the move, walking back and forth in front of the classroom, breaking the students off into small groups and wandering around them, trying to make myself a moving target for the air conditioner and the flooded roof. Since I didn't know where on the roof the air conditioner was, any spot in the room could've been as safe or dangerous as any other. I knew this. Still, I kept moving.

The roof in number five held for the rest of class and the rest of the semester. At the beginning of that summer, the roof repairs and my job were added to the long list of things that the college didn't have the money to pay for. I found another job.

Seven years have passed since I've been to that campus. For all I know, number five is still there, still defying gravity through another February's rains.

I don't talk about teaching much here in the pages of *Razorcake*, but I've been teaching since the first days. When I decided to move from Florida to California to help find this magazine, I quit my job teaching at a community college there. Quitting to start a punk rock magazine wasn't as big of a deal as it may sound. Teaching in Florida pays so poorly, it can hardly be classified as a job. It's more like volunteer work with a monthly stipend.

With the exception of 2001, when I lived off of savings and worked full-time on *Razorcake*, I've been teaching from the time

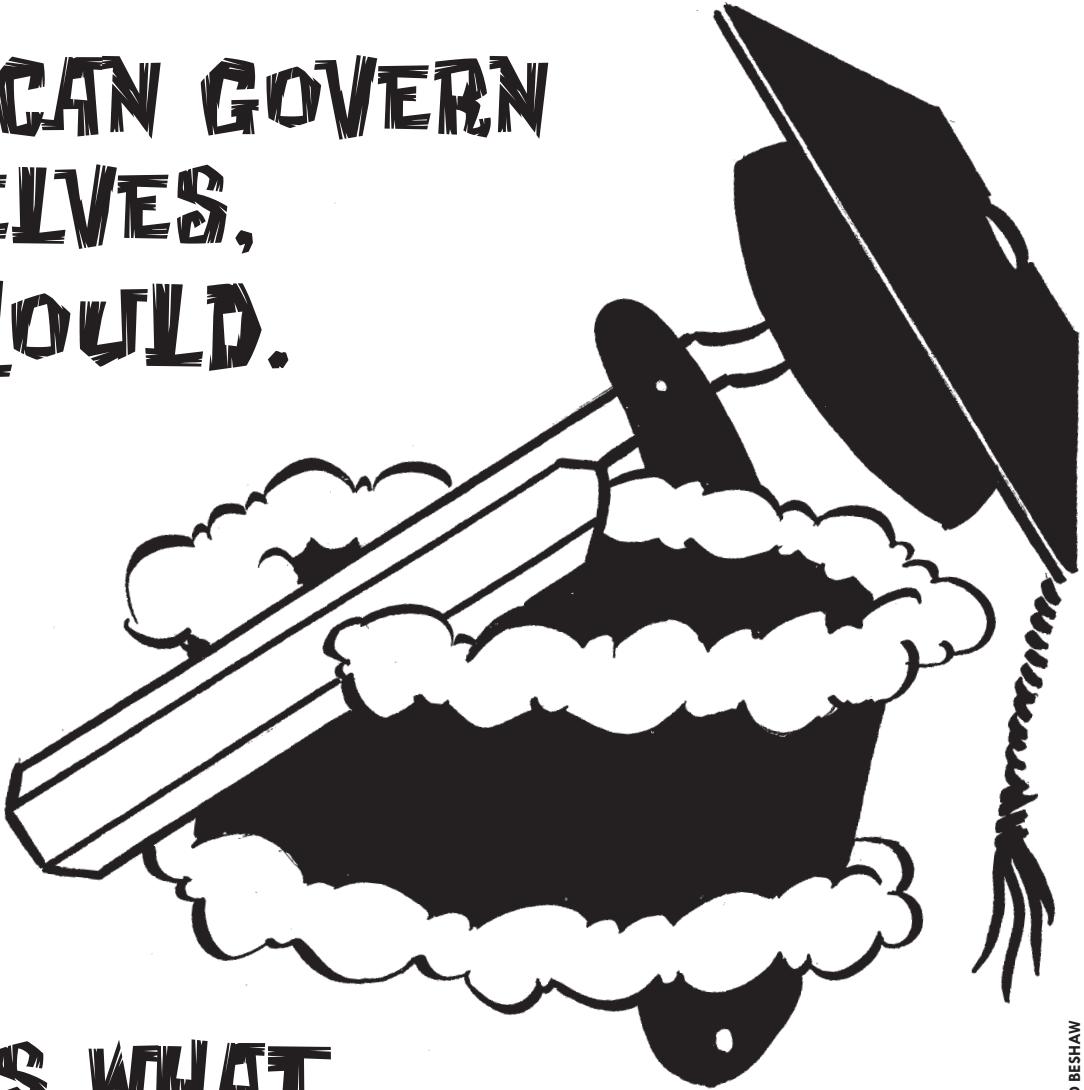
when I first started doing *Flipside* reviews until later today, when I'll go to campus an hour early so that I can let my mind switch over from punk rock columnist to university professor. And, though I don't mix the university and punk rock much, I teach there for reasons that are very similar to the ones that keep me tethered to *Razorcake*. It mostly has to do with my belief in democracy.

I know it sounds like a strange thing to say. But I'll explain. At the core of this is the belief that most of us, individually, tend to make intelligent decisions most of the time. Of course we slip up now and then and do stupid things. Grown men decide to get naked on an escalator in a crowded Hollywood shopping center when they're supposed to be headlining a show. None of us are perfect. Regardless, if we examine our lives in the big picture, it's probably safe to say that, when we were left to our own devices, we did what we needed to do to get by, helping the people around us when we could and avoiding hurting anyone too badly. So, it follows logically that most of us can govern ourselves. And, if we can govern ourselves, we *should*. This is what I mean by democracy.

So where does *Razorcake* fit into all of this? Well, democracy is predicated on a free exchange of ideas. In order for individuals to make intelligent decisions, they need to receive and consider a wide variety of information. None of that information has to be objective. It just has to come from a bunch of different perspectives. One of the biggest threats to democracy in America is the narrow perspective of information that we receive. A handful of large corporations control almost all of the media, meaning they control most of our perceptions of the world that exists beyond what we experience firsthand. Fresh perspectives need to come from somewhere. *Razorcake* provides one of these. The ten thousand or so readers of this magazine are able to experience one of the few subcultures in America that still grows organically. It's an American culture that exists beyond Wal-Mart and McDonalds, beyond Fox and Disney. It's a culture that we've created rather than one that's been sold to us. It's liberating.

Universities work in a similar fashion. They're the largest and most powerful places in society where a free exchange of ideas still exists. University professors have a tremendous amount of freedom with regards

IF WE CAN GOVERN OURSELVES, WE SHOULD.



THIS IS WHAT I MEAN BY DEMOCRACY.

to what they study and what they teach. And, unlike most people who are given a pulpit in our society, professors actually have to research their topics extensively and demonstrate an advanced knowledge in their field before they can express their views. They can't pretend to be an authority on a different topic every night like Bill O'Reilly and Jon Stewart or like most bloggers do. They have to actually know what they're talking about.

Most discussion about universities these days focuses around money and jobs. I'm not as interested in that, mostly because people ignore the facts in that discussion. The fact is, universities are a good investment. A typical California State University graduate, regardless of what his major is, will make about a million dollars more in his lifetime than if he hadn't gone to college. This means he'll pay about \$300,000 more in state and federal taxes. Ninety-thousand students graduated from the CSU last year. Do the math. The CSU made the federal government and the state of California about \$27 billion

last year. The state invested about \$3 billion. That's a pretty good profit.

But, again, I'm not as interested in that. I'm more interested in the democracy element of it. Because we all eventually get jobs and make some money. And those are important things. But they're far from the most important things in our lives. What almost everyone wants are things like autonomy, free time that's genuinely free of work and stress, deep friendships, and loving relationships. Money and jobs don't go very far in granting us those things. What we need instead is to find a way to create these meaningful things in our own lives without relying on money or jobs or consumables. We need to think critically and be imaginative. And some of the last places that exist where we have the time and freedom and freshness of perspective to do these things are *Razorcake* and higher education.

Recently, higher education in California has taken a huge hit. Mostly, that hit has come from a few members of the state

legislature and from the action hero we elected governor. The CSU—the university I work for—had a half billion dollars cut from our three billion-dollar budget this year. All the economic forecasts show that, regardless of how bad the economy is, taking money from higher education makes things worse. Taking it from the CSU further ensures that people from poor or working class families get booted from higher education, while most rich kids do fine. It also means that, as a society, our freedoms become fewer, our chances for meaningful lives become slimmer, and our democracy suffers.

I'm not sure what to do to change this right now. I'm working on it. I know a *Razorcake* column isn't going to solve this problem. It's not intended to. I'm just bummed out. Lately, every time I go to work, I feel like I'm back in that rain-soaked portable, waiting for the roof to cave in on me and my students.

I hope the crash isn't inevitable.

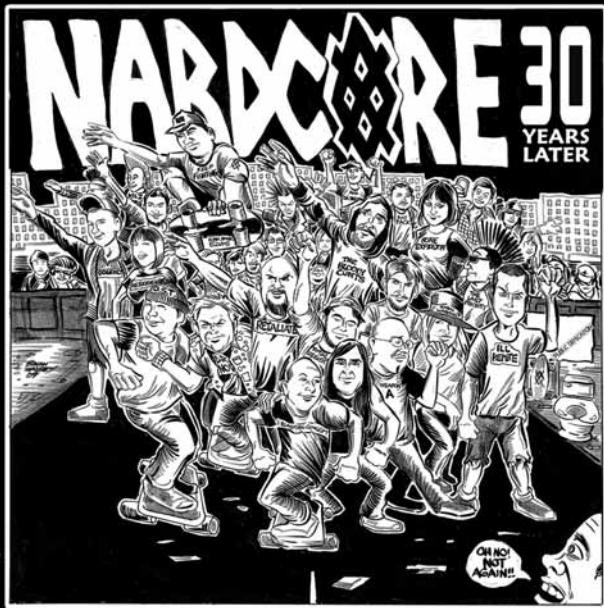
—Sean Carswell



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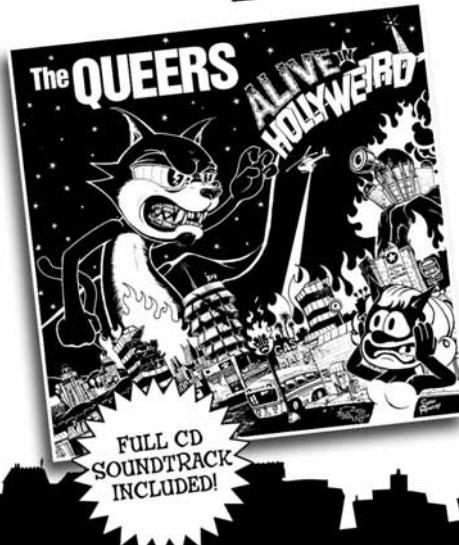


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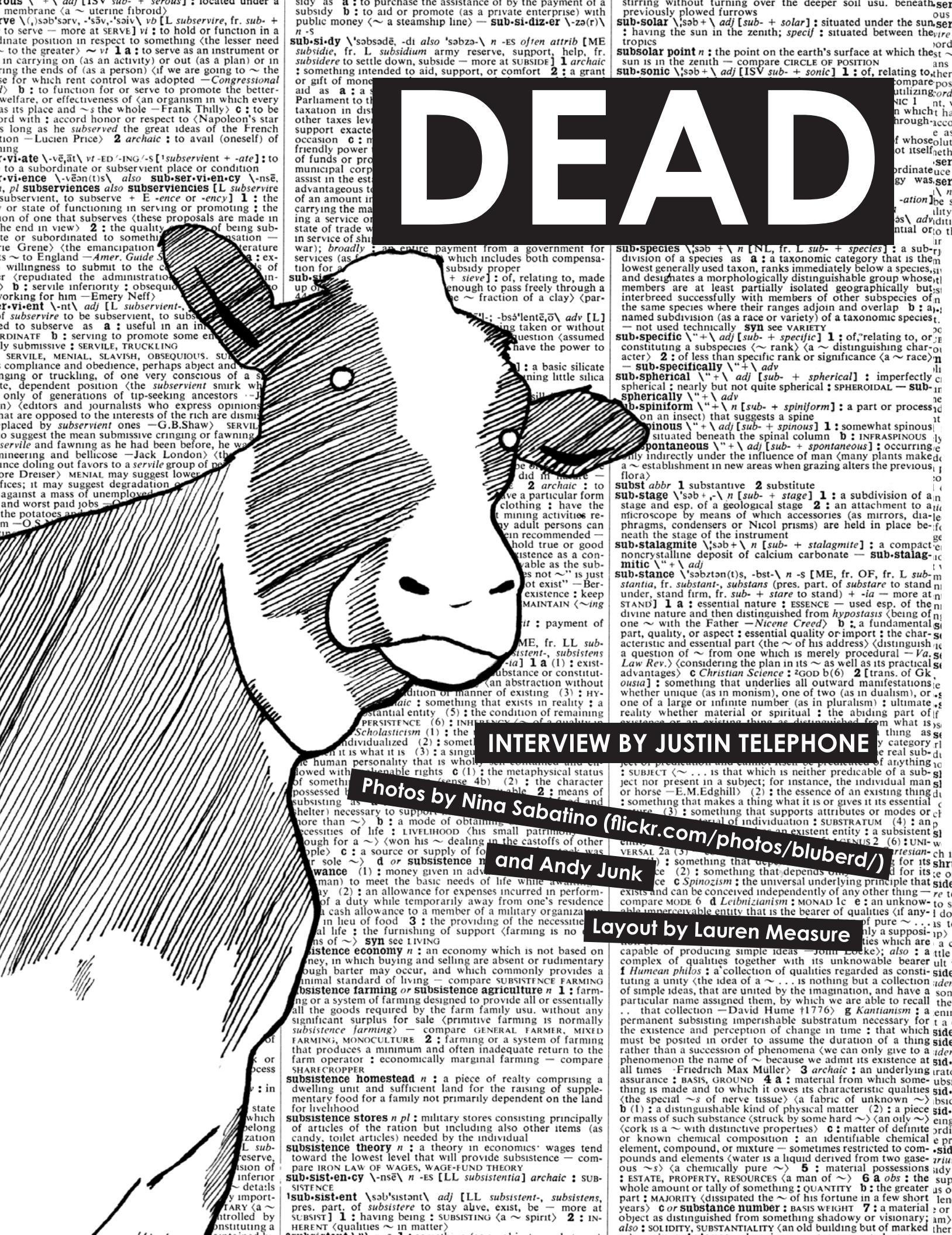
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DEAD

INTERVIEW BY JUSTIN TELEPHONE

Photos by Nina Sabatino (flickr.com/photos/bluberd/)
and Andy Junk

Layout by Lauren Measure

death serious \'-shərəs\ adj [ISV sub- + serous] : located under a mucous membrane (a ~ uterine fibroid)
sun serve \',sərv, ',səv\ vb [L subservire, fr. sub- + servire to serve — more at SERVE] vi : to hold or function in a subordinate position in respect to something (the lesser need ~ the greater) ~ vt 1 a : to serve as an instrument or means in carrying on (as an activity) or out (as a plan) or in furthering (as a cause) the interest of another person to the neglect of one's own 2 a : to act as a subordinate to another person b : to be a follower of another person

sidy as a : to purchase the assistance of by the payment of a subsidy b : to aid or promote (as a private enterprise) with public money (~ a steamship line) — sub-si-diz-er \'-zə(r)\ n -s
sub-si-dy \',səbdədi, -di also \',səbzə-\ n -es often attrib [ME subsidie, fr. L *subsidiū* army reserve, support, help, fr. *subsidere* to settle down, subside — more at *subsidy*] 1 archaic

stirring without turning over the deeper soil usu. bene previously plowed furrows
sub-solar \',səbələr\ adj [sub- + solar] : situated under the sun; having the sun in the zenith; specif : situated between tropics
sub-solar point n : the point on the earth's surface at which the sun is in the zenith — compare CIRCLE OF POSITION

MILKMEN



NINA SABATINO

For a long time, *Chaos Rules: Live at the Trocadero* was the extent of my Dead Milkmen collection.

In eighth grade, I met the first person who actually had the same love for music that I did, Aaron. After finally finding a like-minded person who didn't give a shit about sports and being popular, I was gone. And in high school, I met a whole other group of kids who loved music—bands, not just songs or singles—as much as I did.

Somehow, everyone who didn't try to be part of the cool crowd and who liked music was labeled a hippy. We were all hippies. It was a diverse group, but the one common thread among most of us hippies was a love for the Dead Milkmen.

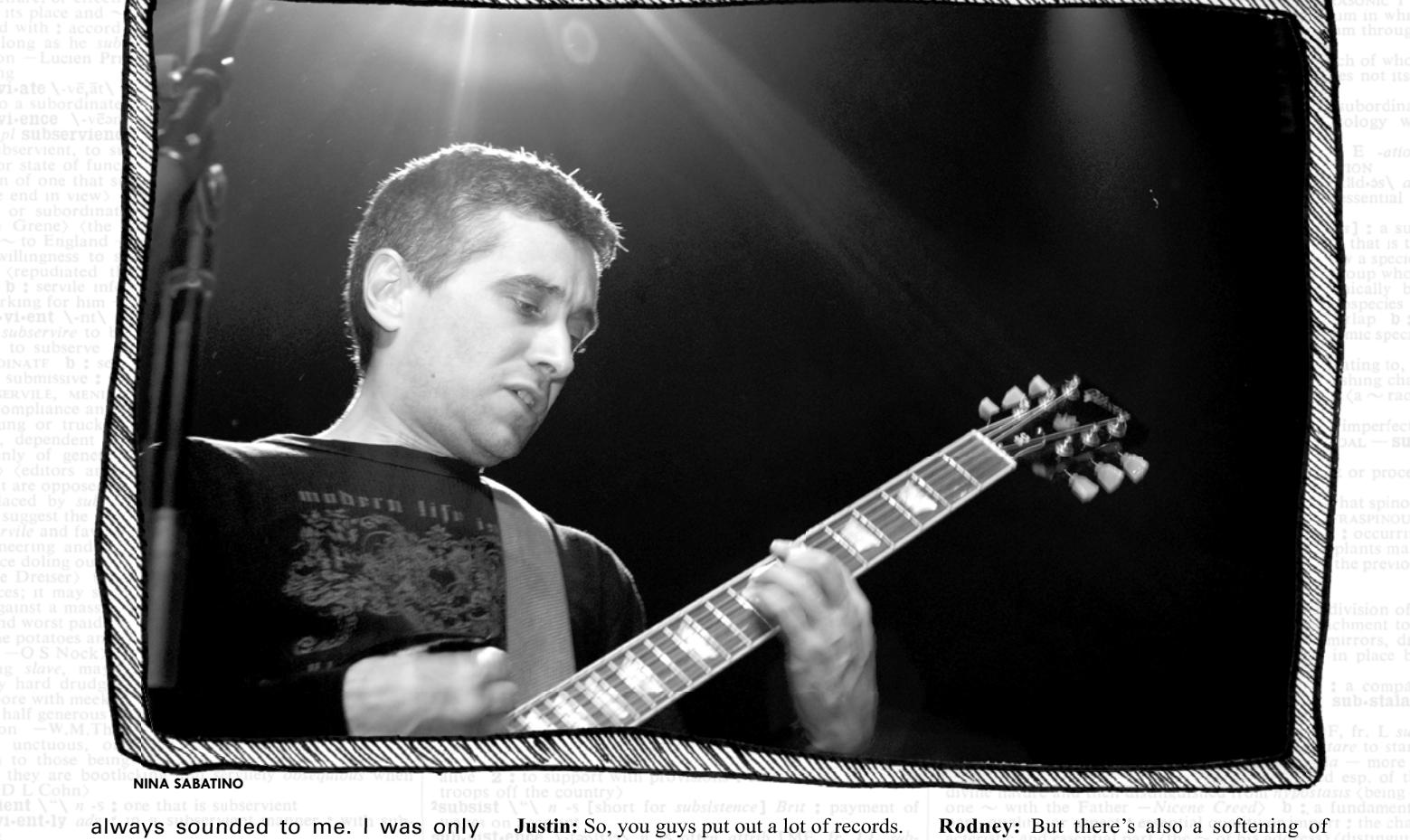
Aaron bought the *Chaos Rules* cassette and we listened to it constantly.

It was punk, but with clean, jangly guitars and hints of a million other styles of music mixed in here and there. One guy had kind of a snotty, off-key voice, while the other had a sweet, melodic voice, and they complemented each other well. When I was a kid, I didn't have any money to buy other albums. I had been warned against *Soul Rotation* and *Not Richard, But Dick*, so I didn't even think of buying those. (I later learned that those people were wrong.) I bought a used cassette of *Metaphysical Graffiti* once I got a few dollars and loved it. *Big Lizard in My Backyard* was purchased on CD at some point, along with my own copy of the *Chaos Rules* CD.

When I heard they broke up and that their last album, *Stoney's Extra Stout (Pig)*, wasn't any good, I didn't give that one a shot, either. Over the years, I heard so many great bands that the Dead Milkmen kind of went on the backburner. But, one of their albums was always in my book of CDs for an occasional listen in my car.

In 2004, I heard that their bassist, Dave Blood, committed suicide. I hadn't even known that one of the main reasons the band broke up was that Dave had tendonitis, which caused him horrible pain whenever he played bass, so he had to stop. I had always hoped they would reunite someday so I could see a show that was as fun as *Chaos Rules*.

PAZORICKIE 33



always see
a couple w

In late 2004, as a tribute to Dan Blood, the Dead Milkmen played two benefit shows in Philadelphia.

Dandrew Stevens, Joe's bandmate from the Low Budgets, on bass. In 2008, they officially reunited with Dandrew still on bass. They've now played a hand

of fests around the country, also with local shows in Philadelphia.

When I heard they were playing Insubordination Fest in Baltimore over the summer, I barely gave it thought before deciding to go. Even though I know most reunion shows are terrible, it didn't really cross my mind that they could put on a bad show. They didn't.

Joe Jack Talcum: Vocals/ Guitar
Dean Clean: Drums
Dandrew Stevens: Bass

Bandwidth Stevens: Bass *n* \(\backslash\text{b}\text{a}\text{n}\text{d}\text{w}\text{i}\text{t}\text{h}\text{s}\backslash\text{s}\text{t}\text{e}\text{v}\text{e}\text{n}\text{s}\backslash\text{b}\text{æ}\text{s}\text{s}\text{} -*h* also \div *-sidər-* *adv* : in turn ; so as to be subsidiary
ary \(\backslash\text{a}\text{r}\text{ē}\backslash\text{s}\text{t}\text{e}\text{v}\text{e}\text{n}\text{s}\backslash\text{ārē}\) *n* -*es* **1** : the quality or state of being **2** : a theory in sociology functions which local organizations perform effectively belong

Rodney: That sucked. It was a bad idea, actually. We should have put out a lot fewer records and taken a lot more time in

fewer records are taken a lot more time in between them. We've got some records that I think were sub-par, and we shouldn't have done them. I'm easily talked into things.

If somebody says, "Oh, we're going to the studio in two weeks, because it's been six whole months since a record, and I need you to write some stuff," I'll write on the way to the studio. There's a lot of stuff now where

the stuff? Then a lot of stuff now where I'll hear it and think, "What the hell was I thinking? What was I doing?" That last one, *Stoney's Extra Stout (Pig)*, I don't think is very good. I think *Not Richard, But Dick*, which came before it, should've been the last one, and I think we should've done our first record and then waited a long time and done a second a couple years later, instead of months later. I hope we record again and take a good long time to work on it. It's a good lesson for people, even if you've already done a record. Take your next record and treat it like it's your first record. Take that stuff around and play it—ask people what they think of it. Listen to it.

Justin: So you don't have the "second album..."

Rodney: They call it "sophomore syndrome."

Justin: Yeah, sophomore syndrome, not the “second album something.”

Dandrew: I disagree, because I think *Eat Your Paisley* is flawless.

Rodney: There was a lot of leftover stuff on *Eat Your Paisley* that we couldn't fit on *Pig Island*, so *M. Murphy* will be

Big Lizard in My Backyard, because we took

years and years to write it.

Joe: We could've always made *Big Lizard* a double record.

Rodney: Yeah, but then people would clean their done on the gatefold sleeve.

Joe: Oh yeah, that's right. We can't have that.
Rednay: And I don't want young people

Rodney: And I don't want young people cleaning their dope all over my record.

'Cause I had that triple LP, *Yessongs*, and it was like a palette. You could put your dope

was like a palette. You could put your dope over here, and your heroin over there, or

over here, and your heroin over there, or you could have a line of coke over here and

you could have a line of coke over here and then meth over there. [laughter] It was very useful. I'm a big Yes fan. Ask me questions

about Yes. I know Yes trivia. We're slowly

about Yes. I know Yes trivia... we're slowly turning into Yes. He's [Joe] slowly turning into Steve Howe. He's got all those distortion

into Steve Howe. He's got all these distortion

pedals now. In front of him is like a row of distortion pedals.

Justin: Do you have one of those boards with a ridiculous number of pedals?

Joe: No, but, eventually, I should.

Rodney: Eventually, he's going to need a lawyer. But I'll be like the FBI.

board. But you'll be like the Edge, 'cause the Edge has that... shable kind of physical matter

Joe: I can't do that. I get really confused.

A GOOD LESSON FOR PEOPLE, TAKE YOUR NEXT RECORD AND TREAT IT LIKE IT'S YOUR FIRST RECORD.

Justin: I just use a tuner and have my amp settings at whatever one setting I need.

Dandrew: Me, too.

Joe: That's a good idea.

Rodney: Well, I have FL Studio, and they have this thing called the Monster, and it's just row after row of lines of pedals. We ran him through it one night in the rehearsal space. That was fun, wasn't it?

Joe: For you.

Rodney: It was enjoyable. It was for me, yeah. But you enjoyed hearing Joe play through those. They have these names that half the time you can't tell what the hell it is. Like, "Oh...this is called 'in the garage.'"

Justin: Are there songs, either from then or now that you can't stand, or ones that are requested often, that people seem to like, but you don't like to play?

Rodney: Not requested often, but god, "Jellyfish Heaven" leaves a bad taste in my mouth. We've also got some other stuff that we'd play and I'd just be like "Oh, god." We've been doing—well, not doing it live—"Helicopter Interiors," which is kind of okay for me, but I just hear myself being a lazy songwriter on it.

Joe: You've got a lot of words. I wouldn't call that lazy.

Rodney: It does have a lot of words, but that's just me—I just regurgitate words. But I was, at that point, opening up newspapers and stuff to get lines, you know, just desperate.

Joe: What makes you cringe, song-wise?

Joe: That song, "Where the Tarantula Lives."

Not because of the words—I think they're

great—but just the music, it makes me...

Rodney: The words aren't that great to "Where the Tarantula Lives," either. That song was actually done to prove to Rich Kaufman from Electric Love Muffin that I could write a song in under ten minutes. Dandrew, what don't you like?

Dandrew: Uhh...No.

Rodney: No. That's cool.

Joe: He's easy to please.

Rodney: Yeah, there's gotta be something he doesn't like. I'm not crazy about "Taking Retards to the Zoo"—stuff I wrote when I was really young.

Joe: People request that a lot.

Justin: Have you guys played that at all since you got back together?

Rodney: I think we did it once or twice at benefits and stuff on a dare.

Joe: We did it once.

Rodney: There's stuff I love to play. I like to play "Wonderfully Colored Plastic War Toys." Oh, "Serrated Edge." I like doing that one, too.

Joe: That's a good one. "Smokin' Banana Peels" is always fun.

Justin: I don't know if this is true, but I had heard you had taken certain measures when you were getting to the MTV level, to not be pigeon-holed or marketed as a novelty act, like around the "Punk Rock Girl" time.

Rodney: No. We fucked that up completely. [laughter] We did. We stepped right into that joke band/novelty...but, then again, I'm not much of a musician, so I guess I don't have too many directions to go in, but the rest of the guys could've done something.

Dandrew: "Fishheads," "Let's Go Smoke Some Pot." I don't like playing those anymore. [laughter]

Justin: Was there anything that people would want you to do, promotion-wise?

Rodney: Yeah, but we could never talk our way out of it, and they would end up doing it anyway. I would tell our manager, "I don't want a cow at this thing," and lo and behold, a cow would appear there, or "I need you guys to do *this*." There's a lot of stuff I don't like to do. I don't know about everyone else, but I'm not good at promotional stuff.

Joe: I didn't want the cow.

Rodney: Yeah, you didn't want the cow there either.

Joe: I didn't think the cow wanted to be there.

Rodney: One time there was a contest and I wanted to give the award...I said "Let's just give it to the girl with the biggest tits," which is a Monty Python line and everyone misunderstood that, like, "That's kinda sexist," and I was like, "No! It's Monty Python!"

Joe: It was out of context.

Rodney: My entire life is out of context. But there's a lot of stuff like that I don't like to do. They made us do *Club MTV*, but that was because this girl told us she was getting fired if we didn't, and that we destroyed. There aren't things I can think of now. Things aren't as bad now as they were then, promotion-wise and just shit-wise.

Joe: I blocked it out of my memory, basically.

Rodney: Joe blocked it out of his memory. Joe's blocked a *lot* out of his memory. "Go to my happy place! Go to my happy place!" Dan, what wouldn't you do promotionally? I know you would do nudity if it was tasteful.

I know we've had that discussion. [laughter]

Dandrew: I don't know. I haven't been asked to do anything weird.

Rodney: Fly to Austin in a plane full of drunk guys going to a wedding. That was the worst. After that, everything else has seemed pretty pleasant. So, I don't think we took any measures. We're just not very... I don't have anything against mainstream bands. There are a lot of mainstream bands I really like.

Justin: Well, did you do anything to try to not be pigeon-holed as a one-hit-wonder or novelty act?

Rodney: I don't mind being pigeon-holed. I have an article I have to write, and part of it is about being a guy in a one-hit-wonder band who had nothing to do with the hit. That's my claim to fame. I'm so proud of that.

Justin: Didn't the guy, Doug Hopkins, from the Gin Blossoms who wrote their hits get kicked out of the band before they became hits?

Rodney: Oh, wow.

Justin: I think he ended up killing himself.

Rodney: The guy who wrote "Tempted by the Kiss of Another" had also written "How Long Has This Been Going On?" because he was playing in a band and they were about to kick him out. That song is not about a man and a woman. It's about when he learned that he was being kicked out of the band: "How long has this been going on?" So, I'm sure it happens, you know. There was some other band where they kicked out the guy who was the lead songwriter.

Dandrew: Syd Barrett in Pink Floyd.

Rodney: I say if you're gonna kick someone out, kick that guy out. We don't have a lead songwriter. We all write. If you're in a band with a guy who's the lead songwriter, chances are the guy is pretty much an asshole. Yeah, Syd Barrett was the lead songwriter for Pink Floyd. Now, you can argue that they weren't as good once they kicked him out.

Dandrew: That's the only album that I actually like of theirs.

Rodney: What?

Dandrew: *Piper at the Gates of Dawn*.

Rodney: *Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, yeah. I developed this liking for *Dark Side of the Moon*, but only because I like the way the keyboard player, Richard Wright, plays, and he and Nick Mason lock up, so he's not playing a lot of fancy stuff. He's playing right on the beat. I think that's pretty cool.

RODNEY: I WOULD TELL OUR MANAGER, “I DON’T WANT A COW AT THIS THING,” AND LO AND BEHOLD, A COW WOULD APPEAR THERE.

JOE: I DIDN’T THINK THE COW WANTED TO BE THERE.

Justin: When you started playing keyboards, was that to give you something to do rather than actually wanting to have keyboards in the songs? Because I had heard that people would bring you newspapers to read while Joe sings his songs.

Rodney: Well, when I originally started playing keyboards, I was in junior high, but I didn’t pursue it. I played piano because I had a guitar class and there was this girl who would sing “Country Roads” by John Denver, taking at least ten minutes between each strum, like [slowly strumming] “Cun...tree...ro...”. My job was to tune the guitars to the piano, which is funny because I have no sense of pitch—and Joe will back me on this—so I knew where the notes were on the piano. He didn’t want the girl to do that anymore, so he said, “If you pop all the high Es, then this will just be a study hall and we won’t have to listen to her,” and I’m like, “That sounds pretty good to me.” So I did that, so I couldn’t experiment on the piano. Years later, I’m a terrible guitar player. I have a guitar. Maybe once a day I’ll sit with the guitar and try to play it, but I’m just an awful guitar player. Joe’s really good, so I can’t show him something on the guitar and make it clear to him. So, in order to show him songs, I started to concentrate on keyboards, which I’m not much better at, but I’m bad at it in an interesting way.

Justin: It’s always been hard for me to be able to tell a drummer what I’m thinking if they weren’t on the same wavelength as me.

Rodney: I never tell a drummer. I just can’t do it. When I do a demo of things to play, I thank God they made drum machines. I’ll use my studio software for the drum stuff. What I usually do is I’ll send it off and say, “Well, these are the chord progressions.” Now we just work on stuff separately and send it all to each other. Then we get together and we kind of tweak it. It’s always group songwriting. Then I discovered how much fun keyboards were. I would start playing them at home. I was in another band for a while and I played melodica (a blow organ) and tin whistle and stuff like that. I play a lot of odd instruments. Now, keyboards are a lot of fun because you can just download everything you want and you’ve got great software. If someone plays guitar, you can run it through your effects. I

try to write everything with lots of keyboards in it.

Justin: I wasn’t old enough to have seen you guys when you were a band before, but I saw someone on the internet saying that he used to bring Rodney the newspaper to read while Joe played his songs.

Joe: That was in the video.

Justin: I saw that, but someone said that he would bring one to shows to give Rodney something to do when you were singing. I was wondering if anything like that was distracting.

Rodney: No, no. I used to start shows by reading the newspaper. I used to love the *Weekly World News*, and people would bring them to shows. I would read them during the beginning, when the show would start with these guys kicking out chords and I would be reading the newspaper.

Joe: We used to start with an instrumental, sometimes. “KKSuck2.”

Rodney: And I would sit and read the newspaper.

Joe: We did that for a while.

Dandrew: We have to bring that one back.

Rodney: I try to sneak into everything now: “It needs more keyboards.”

Joe: I never got distracted during “Punk Rock Girl” with whatever Rodney did.

Rodney: My job, I thought, was usually as cheerleader to get the audience to jump up and down and sing along. Really it’s not a bad gig. You’re out there, meeting people.

Joe: Before that, “Dean’s Dream” would be the song.

Justin: I guess you’ve always just done a few songs per set, right?

Joe: The rule at first was that I had one song that I sang per set, and Rodney didn’t play keyboards back then, so he didn’t do anything. Sometimes read the newspaper. Then it grew to two songs per set, I guess, in the late ‘80s, early ‘90s.

Rodney: I don’t mind him playing lots of songs per set. I’m more than happy with it. I’d be at home, drunk... I think the first one I brought, keyboard-wise, was “If You Love Somebody, Set Them on Fire,” which I would play sitting at home one day.

Joe: And *Metaphysical Graffiti* was the first album you played on. The album that Brian produced had more instrumentation on it, so

it sort of made sense to have a keyboard to fill it out live.

Rodney: Which is odd because people ask me to play keyboards all the time now. There are a couple instruments that I play a lot better, but if that’s what they want...

Joe: You play harmonica, too.

Rodney: Yeah, I play tin whistle, Bodhran (a type of Irish drum), Herty Gerty (a crank organ). I can play the guitar; I just try not to because I’m terrible at it.

Justin: What did you play on “Silly Dreams”?

Rodney: That was the flute.

Justin: That’s what I thought, but I figured it could have been a keyboard.

Rodney: That’s on the keyboard. It’s a really good flute sample, so we told the record company that we hired a flautist and we took the extra money and spent it on drugs. [laughter] For real. You people that are going to read this: Yes, we did spend the extra money on drugs. Then we had a horn section. The real horn section was the Uptown Horns, but before that, I worked out the horn section from samples I had of Miami Sound Machine. I still have them in my old sampler. They sounded great. The guys came in and they thought I had a horn section come in, and I said “No! It’s a sample!” But I was so obsessed with horn stabs. I’m oddly musical for someone who can’t play for shit.

Justin: Was having so many songs of Joe’s on *Soul Rotation* a choice, like he had just written more songs?

Joe: I didn’t write them, mostly. A lot of the songs I sang on...

Rodney: If I can get him to sing, I will get him to sing.

Justin: I was just wondering if it was that you had written more, or someone wanted you to sing more.

Rodney: Let me back up and explain this. That was after “Punk Rock Girl” was a big hit, so there was a lot of pressure, like, “Let’s have Joe sing some more.” We still get that from our manager.

Joe: We did *Metaphysical* after that.

Rodney: If I play our manager songs that I wrote, he’ll say, “Has Joe turned in anything? He really writes well.”

Justin: That’s what I was getting at—if it was from the success of “Punk Rock Girl.”

Rodney: That’s a definite yeah. I think the



ANDY JUNK

record company would have been happy if I'd had an accident shortly after that and gone away.

Joe: It was a different record company by then, though.

Justin: That was Hollywood.

Rodney: Our manager definitely wanted more from Joe.

Joe: I didn't know anything about any decision. I don't think Hollywood even knew who the original singer of the band was, anyway. I don't think they knew much about us.

Rodney: That was a fun record to make.

Rodney: It was great because, first of all, we had all of these people—because this was when Nirvana was breaking—going, "You guys are going to make that kind of grungy record," and we were like...

Joe: We made the opposite.

Rodney: And this was before the *X-Files* and songs about black helicopters and everything, so nobody was out exploring this shit. So, we had all this room to fail, which we did, but I thought we failed pretty well. I'm pretty happy with it. We did it with Ted Nicely, who is crazy.

Dandrew: Didn't Ted Nicely hold off on a Fugazi record to do *Soul Rotation*?

Joe: I don't think so. I think he did a Fugazi record right before he did *Soul Rotation*.

Rodney: I've always said that I've had this inferiority complex that I'm always sure that our manager would be happy if I had an

accident and Joe sang all the time. Sometimes when I turn in songs I'll say that Joe wrote them, so he'll say, "Oh! That's really good!"

Joe: The songs that I sing are often written by someone else, like Dean, or you (Rodney) wrote some, like "Here Comes Mr. X."

Rodney: I like to write for other people to sing. I like writing songs for women because I like writing for the female voice. I was working on a song called, "No One Knows My History," and there's a line, "No man know my history, my reality, my telemetry. No man knows my history, so I'm warning you not to fuck with me," which, when a woman says it, is empowering. When a guy says it, it's a drunk guy at a bar. Although,

neither Joe or I are big into posing, so when we say, "Don't you fuck with me," it could be empowering. Either one of us could sing it. I prefer to write for him to sing. I'm always trying to get him to sing the stuff. When I write, I'll say, "Well, I'll play this, and you sing," but then I tend to know the lyrics, so I'll sing them at practice and stuff. Dandrew came up with his first songs and they were great Milkmen songs.

Justin: Have you guys come up with many new songs yet?

Rodney: A shitload of new songs. We just don't know what we're going to do with them.

Justin: Does it seem much different, since its been over ten years?

Rodney: It seems better. Yeah, everybody should quit for ten years. Seriously. Stop it!

Stop it now! If you're just turning out crap, stop it! Take a break, go do something else. Then come back.

Joe: You get a fresh perspective.

Rodney: I like it because it's very different, and all of us have turned in stuff. We need a gluton of songs, like sixty, and we'll whittle that down to a record length. Maybe none of mine will end up on there, but its been fun writing. I try to write a lot.

Justin: To go into downer territory, you said "I Can't Stay Awake" was written while Dave was hospitalized.

Joe: It was written about the time he was hospitalized. I don't think he wrote it *while* he was hospitalized.

Rodney: In the hospital, yeah. "Bring me a pen! I've got inspiration!"

Justin: Was his depression something that everyone in the band was well aware of?

Rodney: No. Not at all. simple ideas. John Locke; also: knowable beauty regarded as constitutive of art.

Joe: I was not aware of it. I knew Dave was moody. I was moody, too.

Rodney: We were all pretty moody. This is an example of how bad things were: When you're stuck in a van and you're playing Cleveland for the fourth time in a year, you get depressed. You get really depressed on the road. We were in Europe one time, and it was the coldest winter in history. We had been on tour for almost a year before that, and I remember trying to put my foot in front of a car so it would run over my foot and I could go home. For real. I'm not making that



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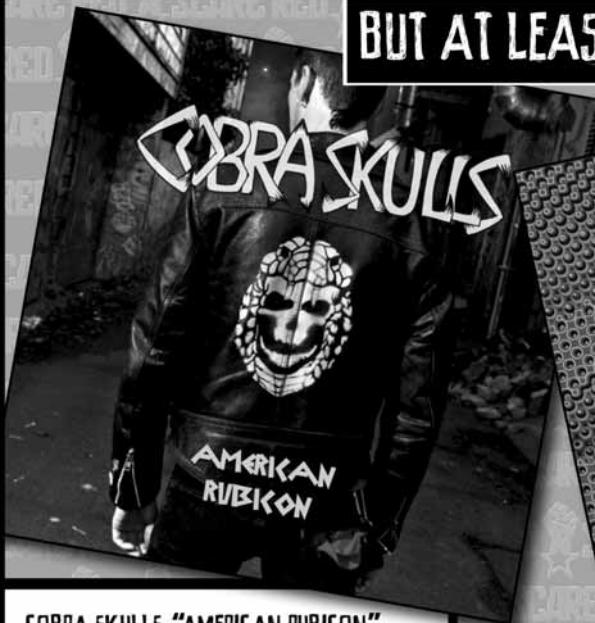
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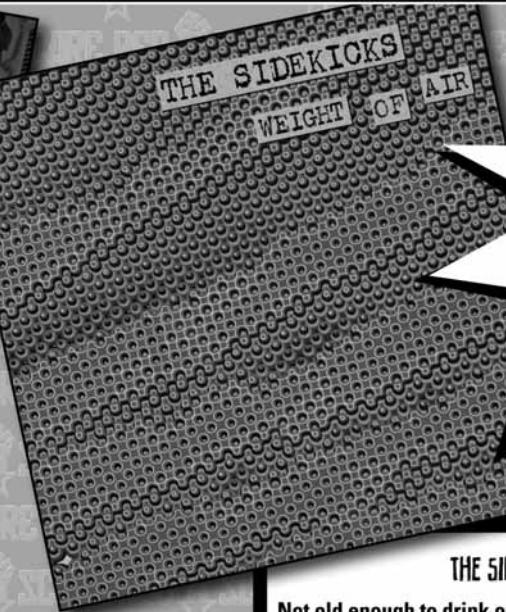
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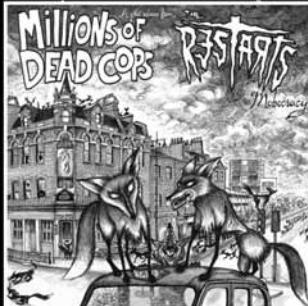
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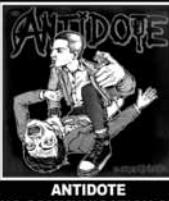
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at one point, but the thing with Debbie Gibson was...

Dean: Wasn't it some radio station promotion?

Rodney: Yeah, in Jersey. They didn't have a piano stool, so Debbie Gibson played the piano on her knees. We also wound up playing on the same bill as a mime, so it was a show broadcast on the radio! backstage at this thing, and it was another radio thing, and I'm saying, "Excuse me. Do you know you're about to put a mime on the radio?" All of a sudden it was like this light bulb came on above the woman's head, like, "Yeah, I guess that doesn't work." They would play "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" and he would mime to it.

Dandrew: You played with Salt-n-Pepper?

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Rodney: Yeah, we got to play with the
and I was, and still am, a huge Salt-n-Pepper fan. The audience was not so into us, so I made the mistake of jumping into the audience at the end. I pulled up my shirt and showed the other guys later on that I was just covered in bruises. People would come up and just start punching me. It reminds me of high school. Luckily, high school prepared me for that.
Justin: With having shows like that, did you

Justin: I'm having fun now in this, did you have any problems with people taking lyrics to songs like "Tiny Town" seriously?

Rodney: We got a letter from a radio station about "Tiny Town" saying, "We banned your song," so I wrote back saying, "Well, I'm really glad you were appointed censors. They banned it, and they were this ultra-liberal station that was against censorship. I was so confused that they couldn't see it was a parody, so I explained "parody" to them, and they were like, "Thank you for explaining that, but you're still banned." Sometimes it's a badge of honor to be banned by certain people.

[Two girls enter the backstage and go straight into the bathrooms together.]

[into the bathroom together.]
Dean: Now if you and I did that, wouldn't
be weird? [laughter]

Rodney: "I have to use the bathroom." "The rhythm section is in there." [laughs]

The rhythm section is in there. [laughs] We were in a club in Atlanta and some guys went to the bathroom doing a bunch of coke, and about a week later, those were the girls that Rob Lowe was with. technically, we shared a stage with Rob Lowe. A stage of an infection. [sarcastic laughter] Again, the people in the orbit of us become famous.

Justin: I'm not sure that that makes them

Dean: You'll go on to have your own *talent show*.

Justin: I'll never do an interview again after this bullshit. [laughter]

Rodney: That was the funniest thing... I'm sure that's in there. If I read this interview and that's not in there, I'm going to hunt you down and kill you.
Justin: Dean, can you think of spec

instances where you didn't have a smile
your face?

stirring without turning over the deeper soil usu. bene previously plowed furrows
sub-solar \səb-\'sôlər adj [sub- + solar] : situated under the sun : having the sun in the zenith; specif : situated between tropics
subsolar point n : the point on the earth's surface at which sun is in the zenith — compare CIRCLE OF POSITION



**SO WE TOLD THE
RECORD COMPANY
THAT WE HIRED A
FLAUTIST AND WE TOOK
THE EXTRA MONEY AND
SPENT IT ON DRUGS.
[LAUGHTER] FOR REAL.**

Dandrew: Sometimes Dean's ever-present smile helps to keep me going on stage when well maybe once when the stage monitor goes off I didn't know what he was doing.

Justin: How true to your dream was "Dear Dream"? Was there much embellishment?

Dean: “Dean’s Dream,” the song, is pretty much as I wrote it down. I really did have

Justin: I'm supposed to ask you guys about that dream. Joe did a great job turning that dream into a song.

what may have been your first ever show, Pine Street in the Fall of 1984. If that was the first, then it was second to the show at Harleysville Rec Center.

Street Beverage Center, which they closed down because they were selling crank out of there. That was when we had to make a decision as to what kind of candy, toilet articles) needed by the individual.

they just kept saying, "Keep playing!" They were filling these people up on booze. There was a guy who would tell obscene racist jokes, and a woman would

obscene, racist jokes, and a woman would just tell racist jokes. She would say, "Can I tell a joke?" and we'd say, "Sure," and everyone's yelling, "No! No! Turn her off!" So that was the Pine St. Beverage Center. The Harleysville Rec Center was the first show.

Dean: That was when I met Rodney.

Rodney: We met at our first show. The Beverage Center was great if you drank.

Beverage Center was great if you drank, because if you could drink a hundred different kinds of beer in some certain amount of time, your name would be put up on the wall. I was just about to get my name on the wall when the cops shut the place down.



DONOTHEDEAD

Back in 2005, I set up a tour for friends of mine, John Brown's Army from Albany, NY. The first night of the tour was at the Che Café in San Diego, and one of the openers was a local band called Life Crisis. No one knew what to expect. The scene was still in the final throes of lame, whacky thrash bands, so expectations were pretty low. As soon as Life Crisis ripped into their set, we were all blown away by how f'n great they were. It's as though someone opened a window and let some fresh air into the place. Like, finally, here's a band you can get behind and not be embarrassed of. The JBA guys and I all picked up their debut EP, *Unpeaceful Protest*, after the show as though it was gold. It's like it became some sort of badge of honor.

Of all the bands we had seen on that tour, Life Crisis was the one we all agreed was the absolute best. You would be in the van heading up the coast, and out of the silence someone would say, "Yeah, Life Crisis is the best band we've seen on this tour." It was a statement you couldn't argue with.

Time passed, and Life Crisis became a topic on nerd boards, and then I read a post that they were calling it quits. The singer decided to move to Knoxville, TN, and with a European tour planned, they had

to pull the plug. It's like, fuck man, they were just getting started and then kaput. Where's the justice? Well, the rest of the band were wise enough to know they had a good thing. So, not long after, they formed Death Crisis with Albert from Chicken Farm handling the frontman duties.

As much as Life Crisis ripped, Death Crisis is even better. They're easily one of the best hardcore punk bands in Southern California. (I have no idea what's up with the rest of the state, so I'm not going to make some statement that they're the best California has. It's a strong possibility, though.) They're definitely influenced by the golden era of hardcore punk, but are not some soulless rehash band. They're well aware of the present, which is reflected in their lyrics and in their performance. Albert is one of the best and most entertaining frontmen in hardcore to come along in some time. His eyes bug out, his face contorts, and his body twists up as he delivers the lyrics. It looks as though he's going to snap mentally and maul whoever is standing nearby.

They just released their debut EP on their own label. I encourage you to get a copy, or two, or three. Then go out and see them live.

Interview by Matt Average. Photos by Donofthedead and Matt Average.

Adam: drums / **Dale:** bass / **Drew:** guitar / **Rob Logic:** guitar / **Alberto:** vocals

Adam: The old Life Crisis singer and I used to joke around that Death Crisis would be our next band name. I just kind of went with that. We had three fourths of the original band. It took us a while to find Alberto.

M.Avg: Is that who you were looking for?

Rob: I knew Alberto for years, and knew he would be awesome for this band.

Albert: What's funny, is Adam told me, "Hey, I want you to sing in my hardcore band." I was like, 'Fuck yeah man! Fuck yeah!' So I kept bugging him. I kept calling him randomly, leaving these drunk messages, "What the fuck?!" So, finally, he's like, "Yeah, we're gonna do this." I thought I was the singer. Then he was like, "Well, you still gotta audition." [laughter]

Rob: After we tried him out, we were like, "Alright, cool. That's it."

Adam: I think everybody was sold about three minutes in. [laughter]

Drew: Albert pulled his pants down and showed us all his dick. [laughter]

Albert: I didn't do it that day! Was it that day?

Adam: I think it was the second practice. Our first bass player didn't work out. Drew played bass for a while. Then, before our tour in the spring, we got the young man, Dale.

M.Avg: Is he the youngest one in the band?

Rob: He brings our average down.

M.Avg: Is it hard to relate? Is there a generation gap or anything?

generation gap! [laughter]

Adam: We've all got our own things. I can't play Tom Waits in the van. Rob hates Tom Waits. Then Rob plays his really bad house dance music stuff.

Drew: Fela Kuti. We all love that shit.

Albert: Antibalas.

Dale: Antibalas, Afrobeat Orchestra. Any afrobeat.

Albert: I think we're going toward the afrobeat movement now. We're going to change.

M.Avg: Become more of a world beat hardcore band!

Albert: We're going to be called Afro Crisis! [laughter]

Adam: When you hear five hardcore bands everywhere each night, once you get back in the van, you're like, "Uhhh..." As much as I love it, I would really prefer something that is not thrash or hardcore, or whatever.

M.Avg: Albert, Where does your stage presence come from? It's very unique.

Albert: I'm a theater child. I come from a family of seven, and I'm the second oldest. I brought up my brothers and sisters, and I'm an asthmatic. I didn't really do shit when I was a kid, because of my asthma. When I found that outlet in theater, I was like, "Fuck, I'm taking it." I always wanted to play music. I used to annoy my family by singing to the walkman. First time I had a

and you can tell they're into it, I always appreciate it.

M.Avg: Is that what sold you on Alberto at the audition?

Adam: I don't know.

Rob: At practice, he's more reserved.

Adam: I guess, knowing him, I kind of got the impression... drinking with him at the bar, and you see his penis. [laughter] You know he's going to be all right! A lot of pants off.

Rob: A lot of nudity.

Adam: That hasn't made an appearance live, yet. It's getting there. The shorts are getting shorter.

M.Avg: What's up with the song, "Disillusioned" that's on your MySpace page? Where's that going to end up?

Rob: We don't know.

Adam: We recorded eight or nine songs, and we had to edit it for whatever could fit on the EP. That song was going to be on there, but it's so long we couldn't fit other songs. It will be on, hopefully, whatever we put out next. We're talking about doing a split LP and another EP. Hopefully we'll record by the end of the year.

M.Avg: Do you think splits are worth doing? A lot of bands I've talked to have said splits will drag you down.

Rob: I don't know. When I get a split EP, it's always too quick.

Fascism with ice cream.

"Hey, you can't do that, but go have ice cream.

You can have any flavor you want."

Adam: He says we bitch at him like a bunch of old men.

Dale: Very true! [laughter]

M.Avg: What about when he wants to listen to his music?

Dale: Depends on what it is.

Rob: What was that band he played us?

Drew: Battles. [laughter]

Rob: That was terrible.

Dale: Yeah, well what the fuck were you listening to on the way up here?

Rob: I was listening to CSS.

Dale: You want to talk shit about what I was listening to? [laughter] Christmas album shit and fucking pop! So, you can go fuck yourself! [laughter]

Adam: Battles is bad. Super artsy hipster shit.

Rob: And they're not good at it. If they were good at it, I'd listen to it.

Dale: I like it because they're talented musicians. Same reason you like the shit I don't like. Because they're talented, but it sounds like shit!

M.Avg: So, it sounds like there is a

chance to play in a band was Chicken Farm. They were like, "Hey, we need a singer." I was like, "I'll be the singer!" All the stuff, when I write, I feel like it's dramatic. People go to a show to see a show. They're there to have a good time. They're not there to stand there and watch some guy just fucking stand up there and "bleh, bleh, bleh!" It's a show! People are there to be entertained. I take that theater aspect and the lyrics and I just get into it: the words and everything. It's like a monologue with music and a dance. It's all poetry.

M.Avg: The first time I saw you guys, which was like a year ago, I was like, "Fuck, finally hardcore with a front man that actually has presence, instead of just reciting the lyric sheet and looking angry, like all the other bands that are on the bill."

Adam: It definitely adds a lot to the experience of seeing a band. If there's somebody up there, and I'm watching them and they're up there running around,

Adam: We'll choose the band wisely.

Drew: Depends on which band is dragging the other one down! [laughter]

M.Avg: Speaking of the EP, have there been any interesting reactions to the song, "Saddam Hussein Is Dead"?

Adam: No!

M.Avg: Really?

Rob: I haven't heard one thing about it.

Adam: That song was written years ago. I think that song is a little dated, unfortunately.

Drew: That was a Life Crisis song originally.

Albert: Seriously, I don't think it's dated. I thought about that, I thought it was dated. In reality, it's like going, "Hey, Hitler's dead." When, frankly, Hitler never died. Saddam isn't dead either; Saddam never wore a beard, and he had perfect teeth. Iraq had the second highest per capita of dentists, next to Nigeria. So, that Saddam was a fucking millionaire. He had perfect teeth. That old guy had crooked teeth and he wore a beard. Anyway, moving forward, "Saddam Is Dead:" it shows that just because we have

**It was never really fine.
It never got fucking better.**



MATT AVERAGE

Obama and everything is "fine now," it's not. Saddam is dead and everything is going to be fine in Iraq, and Israel, and Palestine. It's not. I feel like this generation is almost timeless. It shows how it was never really fine. It never got fucking better.

Dale: People are still dying, your kids are dying. Things are still shitty.

Albert: Manless planes are bombing people and no one is saying anything about it.

M.Avg: I agree, but why isn't anyone saying anything about it?

Albert: We have a new president, and he's a minority. Everybody who is a minority is like, "He's going to bring change." What kind of change? If you speak up against that, it's like, "Well, you're conservative. You're a conservative because you talk about him. He's so liberal." And he's not.

M.Avg: So, Hitler never died?

Rob: It was in the newspaper recently. They found a woman's skull...

Albert: It was a fragment of a woman's skull.

Rob: The Russians destroyed it when they had it in Moscow. They just threw all the remains (that were in the bunker) in there. It was a woman's skull, but they always said it was his. But they did a DNA check on it, and it wasn't.

Albert: It was Project Paperclip.

M.Avg: Project Paperclip?

Albert: Project Paperclip got Oppenheimer over here (father of the American nuclear program). Hess and all those guys that were

supposedly going through the Nuremberg trials, none of them actually went through it. It was officers, people that were just following orders. I don't think he died because, just like Saddam, he was too high up. It's a lot of...

Rob: It's the Anunnaki.

Albert: It is part of the Anunnaki! [laughter]

M.Avg: The what?

Albert: The reptilian race. The Anunnaki were the gods of Egypt.

Adam: All the jokes that people make about lizard people, that's kind of...

Albert: And they ride me about it.

Adam: Albert is the resident super skeptic of the band, and that's not a bad thing. He has some views out there that give everybody points to tease him about.

M.Avg: Did you use to call Art Bell up at night?

Albert: No, I never called Art Bell. I'm trying to sleep. I work. [laughter] Motherfucker's gotta eat!

M.Avg: I remember as a kid in the '70s, listening to AM radio at night, they would have conspiracy theory type shows. Things like, JFK is not dead. Someone would talk about how his grave was dug up and there was no body. Or that Goebbels was seen in Brazil hanging out.

Albert: Yeah! I believe that! I was reading something, the "Angel of Death," (Josep) Mengele (A German SS officer

and a physician in the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. He gained notoriety for being one of the physicians who supervised the selection of arriving transports of prisoners, determining who was to be killed and who was to become a forced laborer, and for performing human experiments on camp inmates.) was doing a Disney show. He did a Disney show in the early Mickey Mouse days. I was reading this book, and the author was interviewing somebody: "My father was watching this Disney show, and Mengele was on it doing scientific experiments." The old man was freaking out, like, "That's him! That's Mengele!" He was right in the face of people in America on a Disney show.

Adam: [laughter] I think everyone will agree that everyone here is amazingly skeptical of the powers in control.

Albert: It's all secrets and lies. [laughter]

M.Avg: You have an album's worth of material right there!

Adam: There's a lot. Many lyrics! I think every time Albert works on a new song, we're like, "Oh is this one about the Anunnaki?"

Rob: Not yet!

Adam: "They're all about the Anunnaki, man!" [laughter]

M.Avg: What about 2012?

Adam: I don't know. I got into reading about that for a while, and the theory of Planet X is out there. It's got a different orbit...

Robert: Did you read those Zecharia Sitchin?



DONOTHEDEAD

Albert: Yeah, Zecharia Sitchin! He's an informer.

M.Avg: I get the impression that the song, "Until We're All Dead" is about apathy in America. Am I correct on that?

Albert: It is about the apathy.

Adam: That's a big subject for me, when I write lyrics. It's probably related to me hating my own apathy towards things. Like, I hate you for being apathetic, and I hate myself for being just as apathetic. It's about people not giving a shit about anything; even simple things, like wondering why things aren't changing, and wondering why things get worse.

M.Avg: Why do we have an apathetic population?

Adam: Spoiled. It's not that bad. People aren't starving. You can come home, watch TV, and watch porn. Most people's work isn't something horrible. I don't think the majority of Americans have a bad life. It's not bad enough for them to give a shit.

Albert: Fascism with ice cream. "Hey, you can't do that, but go have ice cream. You can have any flavor you want."

Adam: People, they watch stuff on TV, I always think these shows, Jon Stewart, and Steve Colbert, they'll bring up something that should piss everybody off, but then it's always in the context of joking. So it takes people's anger out of it. It's like, "Look at that old, crazy congressman." I'm livid, but I'm, [laughter] "They're so crazy!" But if

people were really living hand to mouth, don't have a home, not going to have rent next month, and I can't get a job, they would be angrier. It's like that with healthcare right now. It was something that was supposed to change. More and more, it's leaning toward it's going to be just as bad, if not worse.

Albert: It's all secrets and lies! [laughter]

M.Avg: That should be your next song title!

Albert: It totally is. It's about the stuff they show us, and the stuff they don't tell us. Like the swine flu. Really, are we that deep into the swine flu? They put the fear of god into you. "You're going to die! You're going to die! Here, take this and you'll feel all right."

M.Avg: There are more and more medications coming out on the market every fucking week!

Albert: The one that kills me is for the leg disorder. Restless Leg Syndrome, shit, change your diet, dude! [laughter]

Adam: I was watching one the other day, and I was laughing. The fucking side effects they were listing were longer than the initial commercial! In this whole healthcare thing, where are the doctors standing up and saying, "I've got a Hippocratic Oath, and you're doing shitty things for people."?

Albert: When I was a kid, and the ol' "greatest president that ever existed in the United States," Ronald Reagan, for all the lower income people, he cut specialists. I had a specialist, an asthma specialist. They

called me: "You need to come see the doctor. Doctor Miller." I was like, "I thought I wasn't covered by him." "No, you need to come see him." So I went to see him. "I'm here to see Dr Miller." They were like, "Who's your insurance provider?" I didn't have insurance; I had Medi-Cal. "Well, Dr. Miller doesn't accept Medi-Cal anymore." At that moment he's walking by, and I look at him. He fucking looks at me in the eye, and he just turns around and walks away. Right there, dude, I was fucking twelve years old, and that really fucking pissed me off! I was like, "This motherfucker is just going to turn around?! I was like, "Wow! After everything he did. He saved my life a few times! I was fucking dying of an asthma attack." They were like, "Well, you need to go see this general practitioner on the other side of the medical park." Oh my god! Because he wasn't going to make money off me, the government wasn't going to pay him. That right there was the beginning of the end. Imagine you're a kid, and it's like, "Hey, that guy doesn't give a fuck about you anymore."

M.Avg: I know you have to get going soon, so is there anything you want to say?

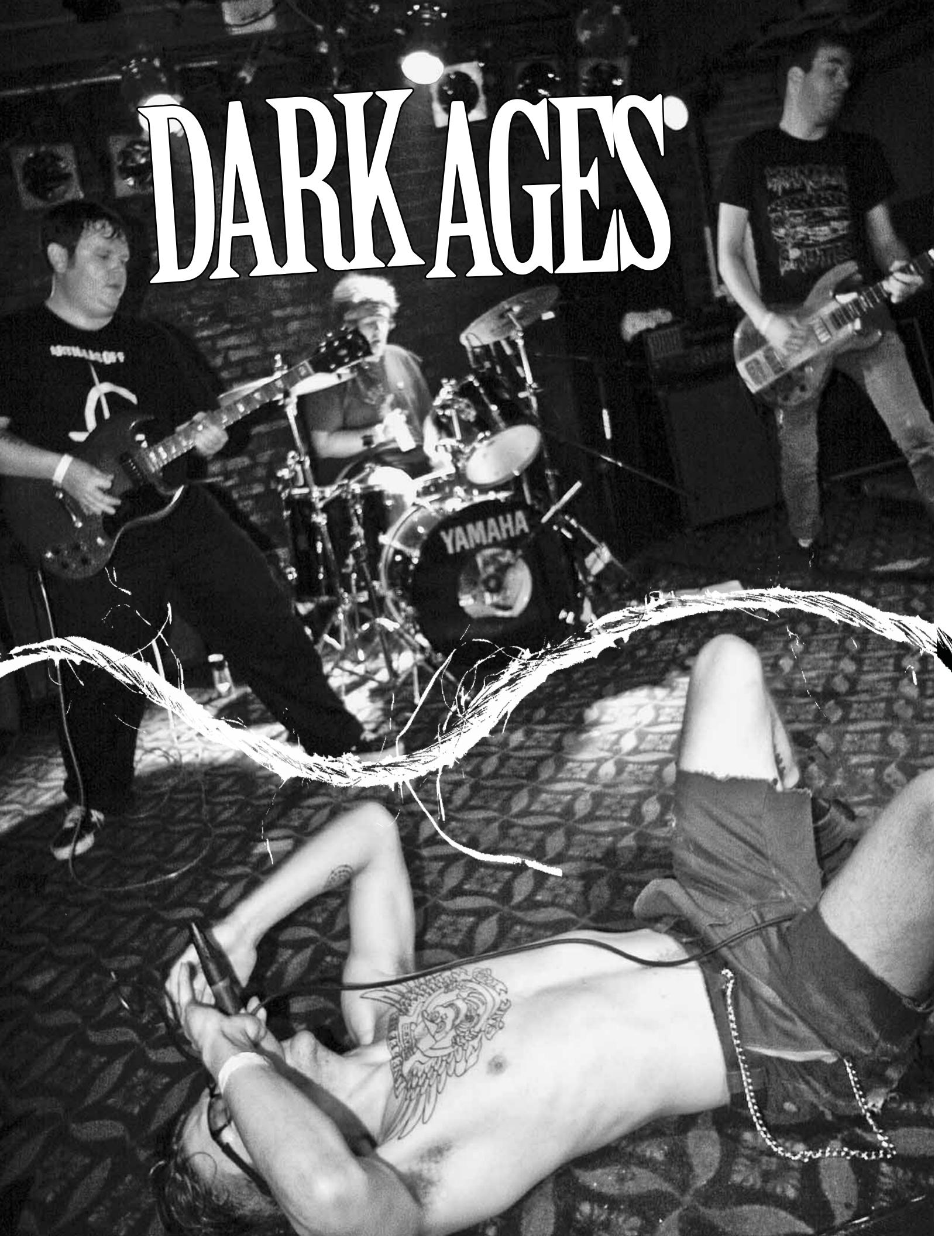
Albert: Hitler and Saddam are not dead! [laughter]

Dale: Beware of the reptilian shape shifters! [laughter]

Adam: Beware of the Anunnaki! [laughter]



DARK AGES



Sometimes, I really feel like the '80s throwback scene has run its course. I start to think it lacks the energy it once had. But trends and scenes be damned. Great bands may gain momentum from healthy, supportive scenes, but in the end it's the individuals and their reasoning for what they do that keeps them going. It's their thoughts, their ideas, their passion, their stubbornness, and what really angers them.

Dark Ages is one enraged band. After a demo and debut EP, they've solidified themselves as one of mid-America's most explosive groups. They play fast, provoked hardcore punk with conviction and power. With an LP in the works, they're a band being fueled by their own ideas and passions.

"All my plans involve improving my own life. Worrying about getting even with somebody would just waste my time."

Interview by Daryl Gussin / Photos by Tony Lynch
Mike - Drums / **Justin** - Guitars / **Ben** - Bass / **Jordan** - Vocals

Daryl: You guys got fireflies in Kansas City? 'Cause I thought those things were totally fake until I went to Springfield, Missouri for a family reunion, and holy shit! Those things are totally real! And extremely strange looking.

Jordan: Yes, we totally have those here. When I was a little kid, I'd capture them and put them in jars. We also have huge cicadas in the summertime.

Mike: I call them lightning bugs. I love living in the Midwest.

Justin: I thought they were everywhere.

Daryl: No fucking way. I'm pretty sure if those things started buzzing around Southern California, people would consider them magical.

Jordan: Well, they are pretty magical.

Daryl: I also went canoeing down a river in a lightning storm on that trip. Does everyone in Missouri think that's a good idea, or just my relatives?

Jordan: I can't speak for everyone in Missouri, but we definitely have raging thunderstorms where there's lightning like crazy and the sky turns green; oh, and tornados. So maybe your relatives had seen way worse and decided this was nothing to shake a stick at.

Mike: This was in the Ozarks, right? They have a different attitude there. I'm all for wild rides.

Daryl: This was, in fact, in the Ozarks.

Jordan: All right! The Ozarks are great. We like to hang out at the Lake of the Ozarks in the summertime. It's a total Missouri-fest down there: tons of dudes with their shirts off and boats.

Daryl: Did you all grow up in Kansas City, Missouri?

Jordan: I lived my first eighteen years in a town twenty miles north of here that is a mix between the last suburb before the country

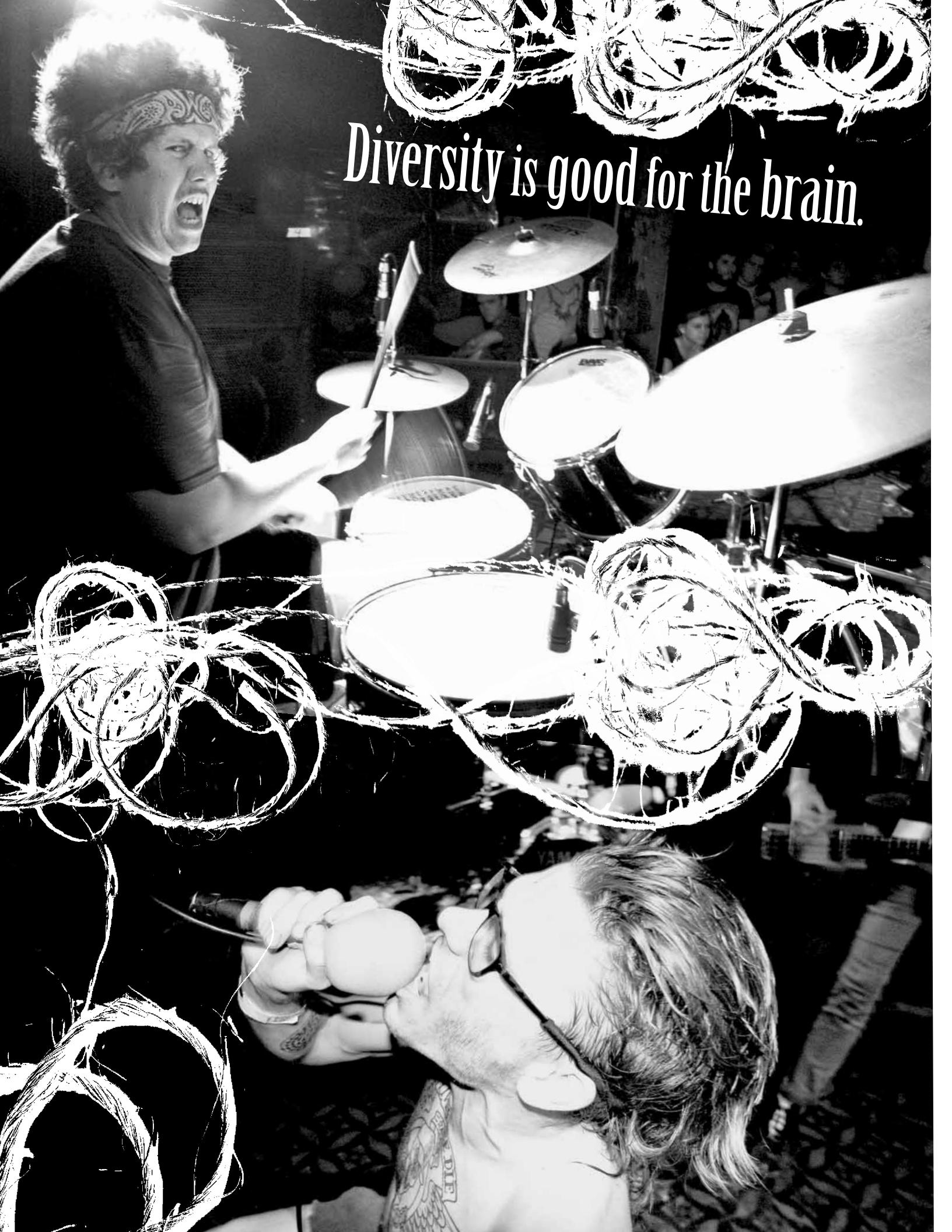
and the last hick town before the suburbs—you know, a real melting pot.

Justin: I grew up in Oklahoma City and moved to KC after high school.

Mike: I grew up on the Kansas side between Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas. Like two blocks from each. I love Kansas.

Daryl: What do you love about Kansas?

Mike: At this point, I no longer distinguish between Kansas City and—specifically—Lawrence, KS. I lived in Lawrence eight or nine years ago, and it was a very nurturing and supportive scene that still has a far-reaching impact on both Lawrence and KC today. People from those past bands are still playing music in a variety of different bands today; some punk, but mostly non-punk. But, you can always tell a band that is made of members who are or were in punk bands. They're usually way better. Anyway, Kansas: It's where I'm from. I spent most of my life here.



Diversity is good for the brain.

DIE

Kansas gets a bad rap in the media. Don't believe it. Sometimes I love it the way you would love a wayward child—a son in this instance. It's a pretty diverse state politically. I'm not talking political parties here, as it's a pretty huge state and the different regions focus on different issues. The extremists attract the most attention and the state is predominately conservative—but with more moderates than radicals. I guess I feel the need to clarify that as people like to sensationalize the bullshit and it creates the impression of an incredibly unprogressive region. There are pockets of liberals and leftist radicals, mostly around the universities. Go figure. You just have to know where to look and what you're looking for.

There're a lot of rad folks and good bands here, and when the punk community is lacking in resources, they improvise, which is great and prevents any one scene from becoming entrenched. It's similar to a lot of progressive scenes around the country, but the cost of living is super low and the apparatus for creating a scene is pretty accessible, especially in a place like Lawrence where the music scenes are interwoven by proximity and a generally open attitude. I'd also like to note that the Garden of Eden is in Lucas, KS, and the church, purported to be a gateway to hell, was in Stull, KS.

Daryl: Please elaborate on this "gateway to hell."

Mike: There were rumors the burned-down church there was a gateway to hell. Then Urge Overkill named a record after it.

Daryl: How did you guys meet?

Jordan: I met Justin when he was searching for somebody to help him release the world-renowned *KCDIY* Kansas City punk compilation LP. He assumed I'd want to help, and he was right.

Justin: I knew Mike long before I met him, so to speak. He's constantly been playing in great bands around these parts since time began... the late '90s. We mutually decided to hang out and do Midwestern stuff like go to the farm and impulsively gift a shotgun. On our way to a very special occasion for one of our friends, we thought, "What's the best present we could ever get?" The answer, obviously, is a double-barrel shotgun. So we stopped in at a giant hunting store and, about forty minutes later, had bought a shotgun. This was in Kansas and, apparently, they don't care too much about background checks, or why a van full of people wants to buy a gun.

Mike: I lived at a punk house in Lawrence, KS, called the Pirate House. We had a lot of amazing shows there and I played in a punk band called Short Bus Kids. I started a band called Olsen Terror with one of my roommates and a friend of ours. We needed a singer and knew Justin from shows and working at Recycled Sounds, which was KC's best record store until it closed. Justin joined and we made a record together. Since then we've been good friends. Jordan came to shows at the Pirate House, too, and I knew him from working at El Torreon and the Spitfire in KC. He started a venue called the Valhalla that was one of KC's best venues. I first started hanging out with him around the time of the Short Bus Kids reunion show in 2006.

Justin: I met Mike from shows at his house and I ended up on vocals in his band because they couldn't find a better vocalist. Me and Jordan first became good friends working on the *KCDIY* LP, but we actually first met when I saw his old band, Alert! Alert!, play a show at this crappy dive called Mike's Tavern.

Daryl: What's the deal with this *KCDIY* LP? Who was on it?

Jordan: Oh man, this is a great record! It was a record in the truest sense of the word. It captures the punk scene in Kansas City perfectly from the summer of... 2005 maybe? Justin's and my old bands were on there—Anxiety Attack and Alert! Alert!, respectively. Not only is it a snapshot of a great DIY punk scene, it just so happens to be a solid jam.

Justin: Yeah, KC had a ton of bands that were playing shows all the time and nothing was being documented, so I got together with Jordan and we started doing benefit shows to raise the cash to put out a comp LP. It was ten KC bands and we had everyone record at the same studio that had the board used to record Michael Jackson's *Thriller* record. Jordan's old band and my old band were on there along with Crap Corps, Dick Cheney's Dick, Blackouts, Hamburglars, the Hospital, When Good Robots Go Bad, Creepy Aliens, and the Skate-O-Masochists. It came out around January of 2006. It got reviewed in *Razorcake*, but I think there was a typo and it was printed as *KY-DIY*.

Daryl: What's the furthest any of you guys have traveled from Kansas City, Missouri?

Jordan: I was fortunate enough to join A.N.S. on their Euro tour in 2007 for the purpose of skateboarding, photographing, and carrying shit. I think the farthest away was Slovakia, somewhere around there. It was great. Eastern Europe reminded me of the Midwest in certain ways. It seems to take a lot more effort to get good shows there, and if you have a grand idea relative to all things punk, it's up to you to get it started.

Mike: All over North America—except the Northwest, Maine, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Idaho. I used to live in Tennessee for a while when I was nineteen. I went to a few punk shows there and made friends with a dude named Henry Daggs. Anyone near Murfreesboro, or wherever Henry tours, should make a point of checking out his show. His music is great and he's one of my best friends.

Justin: As a band, I think the farthest we've been is Albany, NY. Aside from that, I went to Hawaii once.

Daryl: Give me one example of KC pride.

Jordan: We have more fountains than any city in the world, except Rome, I think. I'm proud of that. I'm also proud that most of our punk friends who moved away for school or whatever reason decided to move back here. That's pretty cool. Our mayor looks like a wizard, by the way.

Mike: Gender diversity in the scene. Not too many bros. There's a nice balance. It's a very unpretentious, Midwestern scene, which is great. The further away I get on tour, the more out-of-place I feel.

Justin: I've gotta back Mike and say that that the scene we have is one of the best, even

though it's a constant struggle to find spaces to do shows.

Daryl: Give me one example of KC shame.

Jordan: The Get Up Kids. That is a dated response, I know. Also our aforementioned wizard-mayor is doing nothing but extending a streak of terrible city management.

Justin: Burt Bacharach.

Mike: Anyone who's ever said, "I'm from KC / Lawrence, but it's a pretty good scene." It's a great scene and no one from here should have to apologize, pander, or downplay it to someone from the coastal scenes. We're doing it right. There's no real cult of personality or local celebrities here. People get along, the shows are rad, and there's a sense of openness that I haven't found in other scenes. There's minimum bullshit and drama. I love it. Just like everywhere, we have our bad years or eras. Right now, we have no fixed all-ages show space. People have picked up the slack in recent years since Valhalla closed, but as anyone who's run a show space knows you can get totally burnt out. I know I did. But KC kids are resourceful and I know something will crop up soon, whether temporary or not. I think when it comes to a punk venue you should plan on it being temporary from the beginning. Long-lasting punk venues are incredibly rare. History teaches us that eventually—through burnout, fire marshal, cops, or any other assortment of factors—most punk venues are short-lived. So if you're starting one, make it as fun as possible and be ready for the worst. Most likely it will play out that way.

Daryl: Do you think there's something specific in the scene that cuts out celebrity types?

Jordan: The DIY punk scene here is too open to new people, and nice, for that shit to happen. Scene celebrity would indicate that somebody wants or needs more attention than other people, and it's hard to pull that shit off around a bunch of people who legitimately give others a chance.

Justin: If someone tried to start acting like they were special, nobody would take them seriously.

Daryl: What are some of the signs that we might be living in "dark ages"?

Justin: All kinds of things, like creationism spreading like a cancer around the world, Christian fundamentalists taking over school boards; defunding science education, and adding shit to school books that says "Evolution is just a theory"; back peddling on women's reproductive rights; having the largest population percentage of any western nation that believes in god; that there are more churches than libraries or schools; the fact that we have higher levels of access to information than at any point in history, but most people don't seem to know or care about what's going on around them; a general distrust of science; the right wing backlash against science and intelligence... the list could go on forever.

Mike: If constricting religious beliefs or antiquated superstitions hold a tighter influence on the shape of current events than reason or science and limit our ability to progress, we're living in the dark ages. I don't know if that's true right now, but in the past nine years there've been moments when it seemed so. People shouldn't be afraid to speak

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I believe I'm responsible for making improvements, destroying, subverting, or co-opting things. Ultimately, it's my decision to participate or not participate.

openly and be brutally criticized. There will always be tension, and tension is good. I've chosen which side to pull for, but I won't shut out contrasting views anymore. It ruins your perspective and makes you intellectually lazy.

Daryl: But haven't religious fanatics been around forever?

Jordan: Which is why I feel like a boner explaining a punk song about religion.

Justin: Religious fundamentalism—what we're dealing with now—hasn't been around that long, really, with both Islamic and Christian variations having their roots in the 1920s or 1930s. The Christian right that's been attempting to impose their beliefs on everyone else wasn't as much of a political force before the '80s. The same is true of radical Islam, which didn't become a serious problem until about thirty years ago. Historically speaking, it's a relatively recent trend that's been getting worse over time. We just had a president who claimed to talk to god, and people think that shit's normal now. That's something no sitting president before Reagan would've said; nobody would've taken that shit seriously. But in current times, U.S. presidents are now expected to say caveman-mystic bullshit like that because people are regressing and getting more primitive in their relationships with superstition.

Daryl: What do you individually believe? I've read your lyrics to your song "What Do You Believe?" and they seem to be about how Christians' moral superiority is often completely backwards, but what do you believe?

Jordan: I believe in science and facts. I believe in not believing. That song is about how Christian beliefs are completely ridiculous. Sure, it sounds all right at first. Somebody wants to tell me tales about a dude from a long time ago wandering around giving lessons on morality and such. Not too bad, right? Yeah, people should be nice... What's that? Helping out poor folk? Cool, okay. Then comes the crazy shit that instantly discredits anything these people have to share with you. What's that? This dude did a bunch of magic tricks and rose from the dead? Oh, also I'm going to burn in an eternity of fiery pain if I don't join up with his ideas. Oh, not just me but every gay person in the world as well. Hmm, okay, fellow; I've had enough of your tales.

Mike: I think Jordan was influenced to write those lyrics by listening to Jack Van Impe (a televangelist) tapes. I believe in the duality of all things. I believe morality is a human construct that both limits and guides us through judgment and life. I'm not an ideologue and think it's a waste of time for me. I believe

study and patience provide me with few answers, but are as equally valuable to me as action. I believe in a synthesis of empiricism and rationalism and accept gradualism, but recognize it's my fortunate position to do so.

I believe I'm responsible for making improvements, destroying, subverting, or co-opting things. Ultimately, it's my decision to participate or not participate. Death is always an option and shouldn't be looked upon negatively. If I am alive, I will suffer in some way. I'm grateful to those who've suffered for a cause they believed in that I've later benefited from. I feel I do the same, albeit currently in a far less dramatic fashion. I believe in the preservation and transmission of folk culture and recognize that although it may not be innovative, it belongs to the people who make and enjoy it. Just because it seems co-opted by commerce or technology doesn't devalue it as art.

I see capitalism as an imperfect method of exchange. I don't care to read any more about it. It's easy to criticize and I think it will eventually devour itself in a terrible comedy. But I will support tension against it through action in the interest of balance and social justice.

Justin: I have a hard time with belief or belief structures in any form, really. But

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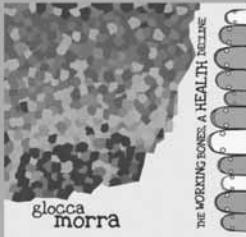
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logic, reason, and science are all things I can get behind. Religion is a copout. Spiritualism, mysticism, and New Age are a fucking joke.

Daryl: On a weekly basis, how much non-punk music do you listen to? What are you listening to?

Jordan: I listen to a lot of non-punk during the week: Nirvana, Creedence, Sabbath and Sabbath worship, surf instrumentals, old rhythm and blues... There's too much music that's totally great to ignore it. I can tell when a song is a total jam, and it doesn't really matter what the genre is.

Justin: I listen to old rock on the radio in my car, sweet Ethiopian jazz that Mike turned me onto, also old soul records. But, for the most part, I listen to punk.

Mike: I mostly listen to non-punk music these days. Maybe partly because I'm getting older and have less interest in keeping up with fads in punk and hardcore, and partly because I've discovered a bunch of other rad music on my collector's quest for unusual and interesting recordings. I just got a rad record by the group Orchestre Poly-Rythmo de Cotonou out on Analog Africa. It's a compilation of the group's work. Additionally, I've been listening to Drakkar Sauna. They're my favorite band from Kansas and possibly one of my favorite bands ever. I've also been listening to Woods, New Science Projects, and some Mississippi Records tape comps. I like the new Strange Boys record, too.

Daryl: What punk, that's not hardcore, are you listening to?

Jordan: Minutemen, Hüsker Dü, Die Kreuzen, Zero Boys, X, Devo, Naked Raygun.

Justin: Wire, Shitty Limits, Hüsker Dü, No Slogan, Naked Raygun. I'm always listening to Minutemen, the Observers LP, a ton of stuff. I'm always listening to records.

Mike: I really like the Oh Sees right now. They put on an excellent show in Lawrence at the Jackpot. Total fun. I got the new Bad Blood Revival record when they played in town, and I really like it. They put on a great show too with Stupid Party in KC. KC and Lawrence have some rad punk bands like Street Legal and Weird Wounds. For that matter, I don't consider Dark Ages a hardcore band. My favorite hardcore band around right now is Acid Reflux; great dudes. I also really like the *Teenage Regrets 7* by the Retainers. They should come through KC/Lawrence.

Daryl: Why wouldn't you consider Dark Ages a hardcore band?

Jordan: What I associate with hardcore is not what Dark Ages is at all. The term "hardcore" doesn't mean what it used to. Sure, if Dark Ages were around in 1981 or something, we'd call ourselves a hardcore band. But after all that time, in 2009, that term implies something that it does not literally mean, at all. Right now, hardcore implies that you're one of a thousand clone bands that all look the same, think the same, and sound the same. It seems there are so many bands now striving to be a "hardcore" band. They go to practice and try to play drum parts and guitar riffs and vocal shouts that they've heard other "hardcore" bands do, so they can fit the mold and be accepted in that whole community. Dark Ages is not striving to

be hardcore, punk, rock, anything. We never try to sound a certain way or to fit into a certain genre. The demo record sounds the way it is because we were all super pissed and that's what happened when we decided to make songs. The *Vicious Lie* record is the same story. When you get four dudes together who feel the way we feel, Dark Ages is what it sounds like.

Justin: I have no problem with being called a hardcore band. Most of my favorite bands are hardcore punk, even though I see what Jordan's getting at. More than anything, it's just being labeled a "retro" or "80s hardcore" band that's not cool. Some of the best bands were from the '80s, but we just write what we do because that's the way it comes out. What is a 2009 hardcore band supposed to sound like anyway?

Daryl: If you could make music of any kind of genre, what kind of music would it be?

Jordan: I can, sir, and the answer is punk.

Mike: I do. Check out Ad Astra Per Aspera and the Ad Astra Arkestra. It's not of a genre, really.

Justin: Our ex-bassist Ben and I had a side project of stuff kinda like the Buzzcocks. That was cool. But, really, I wouldn't wanna do anything else aside from Dark Ages.

Daryl: How do you think dabbling in other styles of music affects the music you write for Dark Ages?

Jordan: I think it makes our songs way more interesting. Mike listens to the least punk music on a daily basis, and he's the one Justin and I often rely on the most for the intensity and structure of songs. I definitely draw influence from punk songs when writing new stuff, but everything would be so boring if we stayed rat-holed up in one genre. Diversity is good for the brain.

Justin: It definitely changes the way we approach writing our songs and sometimes comes through in our sound. Different influences probably come through a little more on the stuff we've been writing for our upcoming 12".

Daryl: If somebody you respected—punk-wise—asked you what style you played, what would you say? What do you call the music that you make?

Justin: Midwest hardcore punk.

Mike: I always say punk. I don't have the words to describe music. Spare the words.

Daryl: Is there any symbolism to the expanding square design on the insert of the *Demo 7"* and the front and back cover of the *Vicious Lie 7"*?

Justin: That was Jordan's idea.

Jordan: I wish there was, and I'm ashamed to admit that I just think it looks cool. It's a pretty solid design, right? It's got good visual tension and whatnot, holds your eye. I use it for flyers all the time too. It's really the brand logo for the type of photo paper I print with.

Daryl: Oh shit, you co-opted the corporate logo of a printer paper company for your punk aesthetics?

Jordan: Well, see this is a company that makes old timey, high silver content photographic paper. They're based in the Czech Republic, I think. So I'm sure they'll never know or care. Nobody would ever have figured that out.

Daryl: Name a record that totally changed your life and why.

Jordan: Die Kreuzen's self-titled LP. I didn't realize any record could be that weird and insane, while still being perfect from start to finish.

Justin: Hüsker Dü, *Zen Arcade*. The scope of that record is crazy with everything from raging punk to falling apart noise, to pop, to almost folk songs, but it all makes sense together and is great. It showed me that you can stretch boundaries and still be punk.

Mike: *Black Woman* by Sonny Sharrock. That record is wild, disturbing, and beautiful. It made me realize that all that mattered to me in music was passion. Technical proficiency doesn't matter to me much. And I don't notice lyrics unless they're exceptionally good or bad. I hone in on the music. Also, Liquid Liquid's double LP, I love the grooves on that record and the marimba playing. It's fierce and made me want to witness them play live.

Punk-wise, the first time I heard "Who Are You?" by Void I flipped out. The rage in John Weiffenbach's voice is so intense. The band tumbles through the song, barely keeping it together. It's a perfect hardcore song. Not too fast, no corny breaks/solos or youth crew shouts; just sloppy, passionate, and angry with some sick guitar playing that makes me wanna destroy my surroundings and hurt myself. That's my favorite kind of punk and hardcore. I've also loved Crass since I was a teenager. I still listen to Crass sometimes. It's weird, ominous, imitable, and mean. It makes everyone around you seem warped.

Daryl: Why are you so opposed to giving Nick Cowabunga Records your phone number?

Justin: He didn't ask for it? I'm never home anyway and don't have a cell.

Daryl: No cell phone? How does that make you feel? Are they tearing out all the pay phones in Kansas City like they have been here in Los Angeles?

Justin: I hate cell phones. Sure, they're convenient and everything but, a lot of the time, I don't want to be found. Besides, I don't wanna be another person walking around always talking and texting; shit makes me crazy. Payphones are still all over the place in my neighborhood, but they're gone from a lot of parts of the city, too many people switching to cell phones and cops wanting them gone to "reduce crime" or whatever.

Daryl: How are you gonna get even? And who do you wanna get even with?

Jordan: The Man, but I don't know how.

Mike: This is outside of my way of thinking.

Justin: [Speechless]

Daryl: None of you have any elaborate plans for how to get even?

Jordan: No, all my plans involve improving my own life as a punk living in Kansas City. Worrying about getting even with somebody would just waste my time.

Justin: Write more songs that make people uncomfortable?

Mike: I'm already even.



YOUNG OFFENDERS YOUNG OFFENDERS

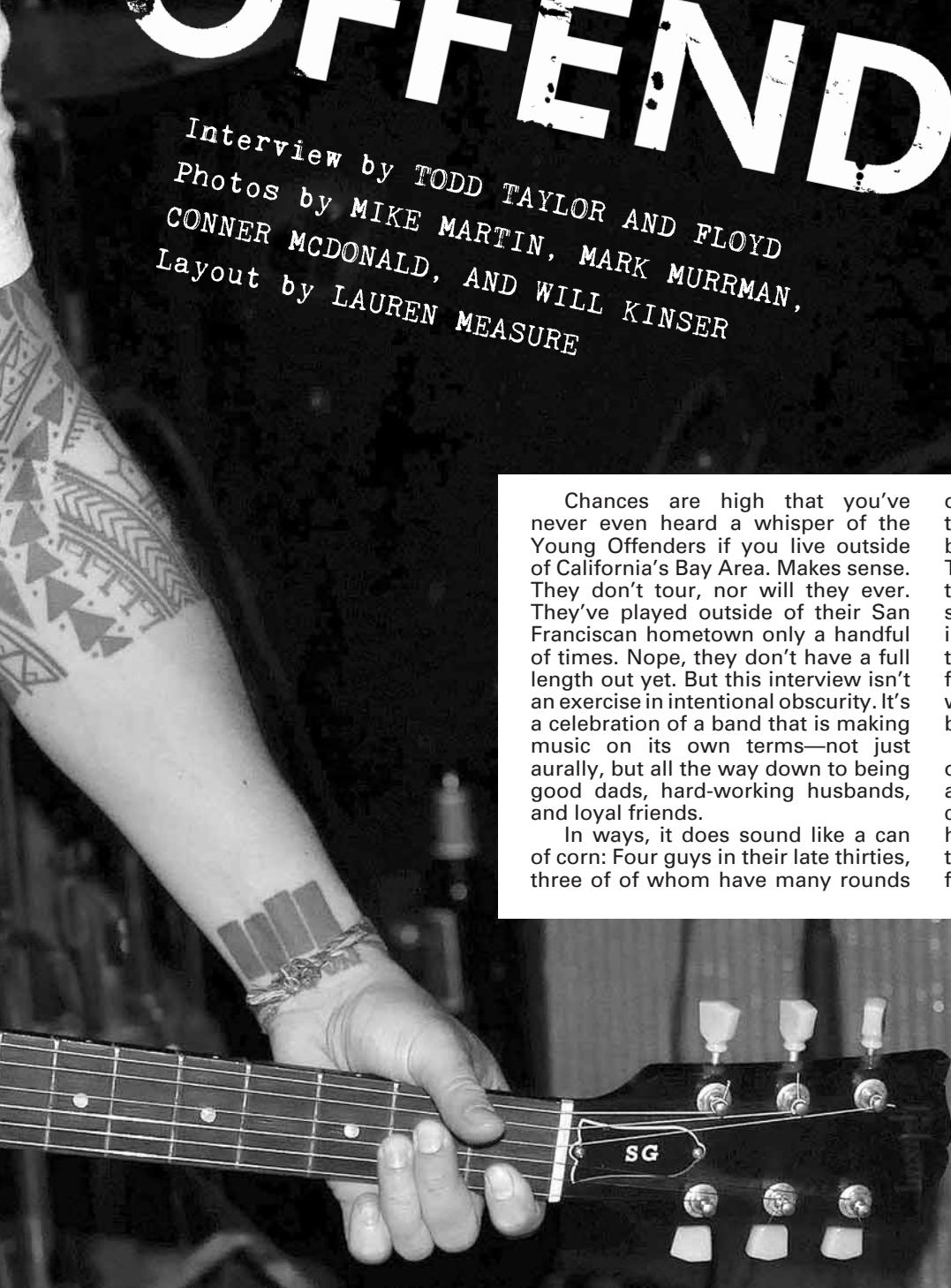
*Interview by TODD TAYLOR AND FLOYD
Photos by MIKE MARTIN, MARK MURRMAN,
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Chances are high that you've never even heard a whisper of the Young Offenders if you live outside of California's Bay Area. Makes sense. They don't tour, nor will they ever. They've played outside of their San Franciscan hometown only a handful of times. Nope, they don't have a full length out yet. But this interview isn't an exercise in intentional obscurity. It's a celebration of a band that is making music on its own terms—not just aurally, but all the way down to being good dads, hard-working husbands, and loyal friends.

In ways, it does sound like a can of corn: Four guys in their late thirties, three of whom have many rounds

of previous band experience, all find themselves having to grow up and not be shitbags. They become responsible. They get jobs. They pay their bills, take care of their kids. Love their significant others. And for many who identify themselves as punks, this is a time when "seek and destroy" often fades into "meek and employed," with a faint blip off the radar, never to be heard from again.

But what happens when the love of making music doesn't evaporate at an age where most musicians retire in cynical disgust or weary defeat? What happens when that spark of wanting to create continues to zip, zap, and flicker like a spark plug yearning



to ignite gasoline? With the Young Offenders, their whole reason for playing music is separate from any concept of "industry." Their approach is to play music with their friends, to their friends. It's part therapy, part partying, part creation. That's it. Their music is not a conveyance with the intent to make a record, to sell anything to anyone. That exchange of goods will happen, but that's not the driving force behind the band.

Shorn of expectation, music can still be liberating, meaningful.

Jesse "The Body" Ventura once described professional wrestling as "ballet with violence," and I think that's an apt way to explain what the Young Offenders sound like. They exhibit a brute elegance in their music. It's like the Undertones with roaring chainsaws. Or, Blitz waltzing with Wire. Or, The Pixies with their hand gently steering the back of Out Cold. This shit doesn't usually mix well. When it does, it's a mesmerizing display. The second—and perhaps more vital—key to the Young Offenders? They're looking forward.

Always looking forward.

Dougie: Bass
Tim: Guitar, Vocals
Jason: Guitar
Pete: Drums

Todd: You guys have an interesting story of how you formed. Dougie is from Belfast, Ireland. Tim is from Cornwall, England. Jason grew up in Downey, Southern California. Pete, Northern California. Tim, how did meet Dougie, first?

Dougie: Remember when our eyes met?

Tim: I met him in an airport in San Francisco in 1996 on the way here, prior to being deported.

Todd: Why were you getting deported?

Tim: Because I overstayed my visa and lied to immigration. I was in handcuffs, taken to Oakland jail, put in the holding cell with people being deported. I was there overnight. Then I got sent home. They kept the airplane on the landing strip and they took me on the plane in handcuffs.

Jason: I thought you got deported from Mexico.

Tim: No, I flew in from Mexico, into San Francisco. Went to jail in Oakland. The guy in the cell next to me beat his head against the floor 'til blood ran past my cell. They then took me out of my cell, opened a door, and said, "Come in here. Find a bed." There were forty people in the cell, sleeping.

Dougie: They passed him around the cellblock like a dirty book.

Jason: The day that happened, I was with Tim's not-then-wife's best friend Kristen. We were drinking at a bar and we got news that Tim had been deported. Tim was coming

WE HAD NO INTENTION OF BEING A BAND.

home and you were going to come meet us for drinks. We were all waiting for him to show up. The guest of honor for the party was being deported.

Tim: Before I got deported, I came to America and met Dougie at the airport because he was friends with someone I lived with for a very long time. After I got deported, the missus moved to England. We moved back to America, hanged around, doing nothing. Pete had gone to school with the missus. I knew Dougie. We were out drinking with Jason and he'd been in a band. "Let's go and do something."

Todd: So, Jason was the last piece of the band?

Tim: We played without him, actually.

Todd: And you did Negative Approach covers, is that correct?

Dougie: And Jerry's Kids.

Tim: That is actually correct. We were called Lou Ferrigno. We did one practice.

Jason: And I might add that they are constantly struggling with whether or not they should still be a three-piece. [laughter]

Todd: Have they expressed that to you?

Jason: Oh, they don't need to. It's a given. That's why I keep writing the songs, because if I don't, they'll just kick me out of the band.

Tim: It sounds like we did more. We practiced only once.

Dougie: I think we'd done two.

Jason: At this point, this is lore, so it doesn't need to be true.

Todd: So, Pete, how did you meet Tim and Dougie?

Pete: I met Tim because I knew his wife. She was my first girlfriend when I was about eleven. Going way back.

Tim: Eleven?

Pete: Sixth grade. That's how I met Tim, when he was coming to hang out with Karen.

Dougie: Tell me we were your first boyfriends. [laughter]

Todd: And you're the only San Francisco area local, correct? You're from Daly City.

Pete: San Mateo, where I currently live again.

Jason: Get that right. San Mateo is different than Daly City.

Todd: You weren't born in Daly City?

Pete: I was born in Daly City. What is this? Nardwuar?

Tim: [to Jason] You're looking at journalism straight in the face.

Jason: Bringing a little more knowledge than I thought.

Todd: What has kept you guys together? I don't know what Dougie's musical past is, but Tim, the last band you were in, Stockholm Syndrome, was a hardcore band. Jason was in Dolores Haze. Indie pop. Pete, you were in the Loudmouths, which, for lack of a better tag, was punk'n'roll. You have three plus an X factor—four different musical styles. Young Offenders cannot be attributed to any of those styles whatsoever. How and why?

Pete: That's the whole reason why: Because we all have different backgrounds and we've all done what we wanted to sound like, so it comes out being something totally different.

Dougie: We all knew we had had musical similarities and musical differences. We said, "Let's jam. Let's see what comes out of this."

Todd: And musical talents, too.

Dougie: I'm a bluffer.

Jason: Tim's a musical extreme, in one way. Tim likes what he likes. You [to Tim] don't like experimental music, music that goes off on tangents. I like experimental music. Dougie is the bridge between us. Pete's more open to anything.

Tim: I'm a music tweaker. That's it for me. If I'm into it, I'm into it. Dougie's the same. We're so into it. We're into so much different stuff and when I lived with Dougie, he would play me just the craziest shit. We got into reggae, soul, Small Faces, psyche, Can, Hawkwind.

Todd: We're as likely to be listening to Malcolm Middleton when we hop out of the van as the Marked Men. I like some Confused



MARK MURRMAN

and Lebenden Toten all the way through to Cat Stevens. My thing is that it all has to be 4/4. Techno, dubstep, reggae.

Jason: Can, by the way, is a prog band and you like Can.

Tim: I don't like the stuff that isn't 4/4 time. Pete likes stuff that's extreme. If it's different, he'll like it. And Dougie likes everything.

Jason: As long as it's good.

Pete: Let it be said that being in this band is a musical education.

Todd: I've always called that one-percenters. You like the best of what's out there.

Dougie: I've got to give it up for Tim. If we're starting to stray off into prog, Tim goes, "No. Guys, whatever styles we've been influenced by today or this week or this month. We're a punk band."

Tim: I'm the wrangler. We didn't plan to be a band. Originally, me and Dougie, we wanted

to be in a hardcore band for a while, so we did that with Pete, briefly, and we never got it together. And then, when we got together with Pete again, we were like, "Okay, we want to sound like The Chords." We wanted to be a mod band.

Jason: When I joined, that's what you were going towards. But then you had added The Futureheads. You'd just seen them and they blew your mind.

Tim: Wire and the Futureheads. We liked stuff that was a little off-kilter. We wanted to be that way. But then we realized that we just couldn't do it. Something like Gentleman Jesse, where it's about songwriting and hooks, we just didn't have it in us. We wrote these songs. They were fine. We were playing away. Then Jason came and they started changing. Then we realized, "Fuck it. Let's just jam and get some songs together." We

honestly had no intention of playing out. We had no intention of being a band.

Pete: The other thing that keeps this band together is that—we started also because Tim and I both have kids—"Let's just make this band as something that there's no ties to. If we have to cancel practice, big deal. If we've got to cancel a show, who cares?"

Dougie: That's the basis for us staying together. **Pete:** And that was the biggest thing, because then we didn't care. It ends up being one of the most fun things we've ever done.

Todd: Which is the antithesis of why most people start bands. "Oh, we're going to get together, play shows, tour, get records released."

Jason: In fact, we have a "no tour" clause in the band. We can't tour. It's impossible.

Dougie: We don't tour, but we go and play a show in California. We're not touring. We're going on vacation. We treat it as a holiday.

Tim: Everything about this band is like holiday. We get asked to do shows. For us, it has to be a night we want to go to. Me and Pete often use it as an excuse to go out.

Pete: This interview is a big excuse to get out of the house.

Tim: It's a time we know we've got to be somewhere. Hang out with our friends. Have some drinks. Have a good time. Shows have to be worthy of going out to. Usually, it's a show I really want to go to. Say it's on a Wednesday night. Someone great is coming to town. We ask to play. If we play, I know we'll see the band I want to see. Otherwise, it's a Wednesday night. I've got the kids. I'm home. I'm cooking up dinner. Then I'm, "Ah, fuck. I'm not going to go." If we're playing, we'll go. And that's the same as when we get out of town. We're only going if it's a good crowd.

Jason: We knew we could be together as a band when we traveled together for the first time to Texas. We had a great time together. It was fun. We all got drunk. There was never any controversy or drama. That first trip, we knew we could do these trips every once in awhile. We're not going to drive each other crazy over five days, which we weren't sure about, frankly.

Floyd: I know you've said many times that you always want all your shows to be a party, and that's one of the cool things, going to see you. You know who's going to be there—and not like, "It's the same people at every show." Your friends, who don't even go out at all, probably won't ever go out to bars, but they'll be at this show. Half of them will travel with you: San Diego, Portland, Texas.

Tim: When we go away, we roll deep.

Todd: Kind of like the Grateful Dead.

Tim: If you mean old people playing boring music away from home, from San Francisco, then yes, but with less hair.

Dougie: Like Jerry Garcia with alopecia.

Tim: But more handsome and bald.

Dougie: The thing is that when we go away, half the people who go away with us don't even like our music. Honest truth. Half are not interested in punk whatsoever.

Tim: Our roadie, Steve, roadied for one show. We fired him because we went away to Portland for two shows and he didn't turn up for the second show. He turned up in a T-shirt. It was raining and cold. He'd had his jacket stolen. It was his really expensive Steve McQueen-style jacket. He had other jackets, but he didn't want to bring a jacket.

Dougie: He was in mourning for his jacket.

Tim: So, Steve, he's got The Verve's lyrics tattooed on his arm. His thing he always says to us is, "Your band's okay. I just don't like the other bands that are playing. You're all right because you're not too fast." He disappears with strippers for the rest of the weekend. He doesn't turn up and he got fired. And that's a perfect example of who travels with us. When we went to Texas, when we played Chaos in Tejas...

Dougie: Didn't like any of the bands.

Tim: And he didn't really even like us. But our thing is when we go away, we go away.

Jason: It's for fun.

Tim: I had a friend of mine who flew in from England to Chaos in Tejas, had no idea of any band we played with. Had no idea who Cocksparrer was. No idea who Amebibix were, or the Cro-Mags, or any of the bands we play with, but he's set to come back next year. It's in the fuckin' calendar. I want it to be a night out. I'm not going to Redwood City to play in front of two people. I'm not having it. It's not because our band's worth more, but because we'd fuckin' rather be at home.

Pete: What about San Mateo?

Tim: San Mateo, I'll do. It's your home turf.

Todd: So, Jason, why did you become disenfranchised with punk and hardcore? You grew up in Downey, the home to Social Distortion, Adolescents. You're in one of the punk epicenters.

Jason: Don't forget Dave Alvin (Blasters) and someone from the Plimsouls. Disenfranchised. Yeah, I think I probably said that in an interview... that I wrote myself. [laughter] Punk, when I was growing up in Southern California, was scary. I was born in '71 in Norwalk. I graduated high school in '89. My years of going to shows was in the mid-to-late '80s. We used to take the bus from Downey to Fender's Ballroom and shows in Long Beach and see all these different punk bands. I had tons of punk records. I think it was great for two or three years as a teenager, but I got tired of the jocky, tough-guy aspect of it. I loved skating and love surfing. I still surf now. It was definitely a huge part of my life and that was the jock mentality there. Beach-side, meathead assholes. The Venice Beach crowd would come down and stand in the middle of the pit and beat kids up. So, that was what disenfranchised me. The violence. I wasn't a fighter. I was a little kid. I loved the bands, but I didn't want to go to a show and get my ass kicked.

Then, I think I got more interested in different types of music. I'll never forget, a friend of mine bought a Smiths record, *The Queen Is Dead*. I'd been listening to nothing but punk. He was my friend who had hundreds of punk records. He was the librarian. Chris Eilertson. Really good guy. He lived in my neighborhood. We rode bikes together as kids. He got into punk first out of all of us. He was the one who brought us into the whole thing. He was in eighth grade with spiky hair and a Bones Brigade VHS. He bought the *Queen Is Dead* and we were at his house getting high. That record kind of changed my life. "What the fuck have I been listening to?" There's this whole world out there. It was the most English thing I'd ever fuckin' heard in my life. I didn't understand three-quarters of the lyrics.

Todd: Like, "What's a vicar in a tutu?"

Jason: I had no idea what a vicar was. That was the moment. From there, the violence

Tim: But he's an enigma in that way.

Todd: So, Dougie, how long have you spent living in Tim's front room over the years?

Dougie: If you add up the American time and the English time, it's the equivalent to three-four years. I lived with you and Karen for six, seven months, followed you around, stalked you.

Tim: You did four months here and three-and-a-half years there.

Floyd: On the four months, in a lot of that time, Dougie would only do weeknights at your place and weekends at mine.

Dougie: [to Floyd] You were my holiday home on the hill, my little trip to The Hamptons.

Tim: When my son was two weeks old, Dougie moved back from Chicago, because it got too cold, and shared a room with my two-week-old son.

Dougie: True. You have the cot. What do you call them in America?



MIKE MARTIN

at the shows, coupled with all this cool, interesting music happening, I gravitated to The Wedding Present.

Tim: They're a huge influence on us collectively.

Jason: While there was punk going on, there was a good mod scene in Southern California as well, with local bands like the Three O'Clock. I was really interested in their cool-looking Rickenbacker guitars, pop sensibilities. I liked the way the girls dressed. There was so much to soak in. I've never been a member of one scene. I think in high school, I was probably a total poser. I wasn't hardcore for one thing. I was always interested in everything.

Todd: What's interesting is that for many people who are hardcore really early on, they are usually the first ones to completely drop out, or they become insufferable pricks.

Jason: I can be an insufferable prick.

Tim: Crib.

Dougie: And a mattress right beside the crib. And I remember one morning, Tim walks in, grabs his two-week-old baby, sat the baby in the bed, and said, "We're going out snowboarding. You have him for the day."

Tim: Five in the morning, we put him in bed with Dougie. And we came back, Dougie was still in his underwear, walking around with my kid, and they'd been at it all day.

Pete: That's love right there.

Jason: He's Uncle Dougie.

Todd: I think this is important because all of you guys are in your late thirties: At what point did punk rock kind of crack open for you? England had a national treasure in John Peel.

Jason: Don't get them started.

Tim: Me and Dougie spent our youth. I listened to Tommy Vance, who played metal.

I got into AC/DC when I was nine. My brother's older. From zero to nine, as far as I'm concerned, nothing happened until the day brought home *Back in Black*. Put it on. At that moment, boom! I'm alive. We wore the fuckin' grooves out. Black Sabbath. Iron Maiden. That was it. "This is amazing." And the faster and the more of it there was, the more I liked it. My brother went kind of the other way. He went mellower. He went off on his way. But his friends who I grew up with were like, "Check out the first Metallica album, *Kill 'Em All*." I'm like, "This is it. It's not quite right, but I like it. It's fucking great." Then I heard Conflict and Crass and I was like, "That's it. There. That's it." From then on, that was '84, '85. Exploited, "Dead Cities." The other one was the big one for a lot of people in England, was the *Made in Britain*, Tim Roth's first movie. He walked down the corridor to "UK 82" by Exploited. I was like, "Whatever the

shit and John Peel is the only alternative. His show was bedtime, ten 'til twelve.

Dougie: Then I had a mentor, a guy called Paul Chapman. He was in loads of bands in Belfast. He was three or four years older than me. I moved in the apartment just below his apartment and he introduced me to a world called garage punk, which I never knew existed. He says, "You like punk rock?" "Yeah, I like punk rock." "You heard '60s punk?" Me, "There's no such thing as '60s punk." And he had all the *Pebbles*, all the *Nuggets*. And I just went, wow. Wow. Music has no boundaries. Like the universe, music keeps on going and going and going.

Pete: Like everything you thought you knew, you didn't know.

Dougie: '60s punk is what really, really blew me away.

Tim: For me, I went straight into the punk hardcore, then writing to people, then fanzines. So, for me, my wakeup didn't

me. At the time, all I did was hold the button for him to play Heresy, Napalm Death. Everything in between was just everything in between.

Floyd: When you're reading your blog, (Bricks and Mortar), you've got the line, "Ever since I got this cassette. My friend made me a mixed cassette. That's the one who started me off with metal, started off with psych."

Tim: But I'm still like that. It's not like I'm done. I'm not done. Practice for us is a two-or three-hour block of time where we practise for an hour and two hours of time is spent going, "Oh, did you hear the new ____?"

Jason: That happens as soon as you walk in the door.

Tim: It never stops. There's always something else to listen to.

Dougie: We have the "man hour" practice. We all talk about our problems.

Tim: It's our psychology session. If you had a hard time at home, with my kids; that's where we get our hour.

Pete: "Do you want to take a break now?"

Jason: And there's a little refrigerator full of beer.

Dougie: Pete, remember that technique I showed you? Are you still coming after two minutes? [laughter] An Irish man telling an Italian how to make love.

Todd: How do you stay involved with music? You guys seem genuinely excited about it.

Jason: Music, in my life, there's been an ebb and flow of my attention to it. Right now, the last couple of years in this band, I've done more exploration of punk and underground music, as opposed to the past five or six years, where I was really trying to work on surviving and getting a career done, stuff like that. At thirty-eight years old, delving back into music like when you're younger that's kind of rare.

In the '80s and '90s, it was more like it is now. I was constantly buying records, constantly listening to things. Everything. In the '80s, everything I listened to was English, English, English. It was great. It's foreign. Then I hear the Pixies *Come on Pilgrim*. This is an American band and they're better than anyone I've ever heard? It's exactly the influences of music that I love all wrapped up in one. There's a little bit of punk, there's a little bit of indie, then it's its own thing that makes it unique. From that moment on, I turned my focus to what had been going on in America. In the late '80s through the early '90s, I got hyper-local. First, it started with looking at all the bands that were playing in Massachusetts, because that's where the Pixies came from. It expanded to New York. I moved to San Francisco in '93. There was so much music going on here. You could go to a bar and see Jawbreaker or Star Pimp.

Todd: That's pre dot com explosion.

Jason: And the Mission was a little bit dangerous to walk around. The Chameleon Club. I saw Ford there. Great garage band.

Pete: Carolyn Keddy's band.

Jason: You could go out any night of the week in San Francisco—and it hasn't been like that since—to any bar that had bands and

EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS BAND IS LIKE HOLIDAY.

fuck that is, that's what I am. That music is what I am. That's it."

Dougie: John Peel would play all the grindcore and all the crust stuff and I was introduced to the Wire and Snuff and this whole, broad spectrum. The Mekons. "My god. Music is so vast." Before I started tuning to John Peel, I had a couple of tapes. I had Angelic Upstarts, Sex Pistols, Dead Kennedys, Blitz, and The Jam. That was my punk rock catalog. Sixteen, seventeen, I tuned into John Peel. "Oh my god."

Todd: Just so people understand, he was broadcast over all the British Isles.

Dougie: Southern Ireland, Northern Ireland.

Tim: In the British Isles, you have your local radio stations, which you have one or two. And the BBC has four channels, which everyone can get. BBC One is popular music. Two is more folk. Three is talk show and four is classical. One, Radio One, it was all pop

come until my mid-twenties, until I got into other music. It went from metal to hardcore to punk and that was it. Dougie was already way ahead of us. He was playing stuff that he'd been listening to since he was sixteen.

Dougie: I was wearing paisley shirts, had a mop top. Chelsea boots. But I was dressed like this and going to watch Carcass. And I was taught that music doesn't discriminate at all. If it's good, it's good.

Tim: If you go online and Google "Gorilla Biscuits Belfast," it's them playing Belfast.

Dougie: It was 1990. I was twenty-one.

Tim: There's this blur in front of the stage, then this fuckin' stick.

Jason: With long, ginger hair.

Tim: And that's him in 1990. John Peel was big for us. I got into the other stuff that John Peel played later. Les Thugs and the African stuff. Then I went back and it was a comforting thing for

you would see somebody that was good. And they were all local or from the Bay Area. Tina, Age 13. Fucking great. Trumans Water from San Diego would come up and play. Tanner. Heavy Vegetable. It was just a great time for music. The Meices. Corduroy. Carlos. Steel Pole Bathtub. A Minor Forest. They weren't necessarily the best band you've ever heard in your life, but they'd be playing all the time.

Jason: Ovarian Trolley. I remember seeing that everywhere. I got into a band, influenced by all that stuff that was going on around me. I was mostly listening to local San Francisco or California music in the '90s. Then I moved back East, to New York for a while. Nobody knew about it. I was all, "These are the best bands in the world."

Floyd: I moved here the first day of '93. Before that, I was in San Diego. You would see Rocket From The Crypt or Superchunk with Heroin. People don't think about it until later. When people classify 'em, they get classified apart. Even today, they'll be bands that play together all the time, but in twenty years, "Oh, this band was part of this scene, and that band wasn't." I think it's a later classification when people are getting in and going backwards. The weird one, on the mainstream thing: Fishbone.

Jason: When I was growing up in high school, I remember that. No Doubt was the band that was always added on as the openers for The Untouchables, Fishbone, and that whole scene. They were this band that was trying really hard.

Floyd: They were the street fair band. They would play the second, third-rate street fair.

Jason: Scenes, and classifying music—that was never something that I did. I knew what scenes they were, but I was never a part of any scene, necessarily. I've never been the hardcore punk, so I went and saw everything.

Dougie: Basically, I had to travel. We had a decent music scene, but it wasn't so good that you could pick and chose. You didn't want to pick and chose. One minute, you'd be seeing Doom and the next you'd be seeing frickin' Derrick May. The same crowd would be at Doom as the crowd taking E, with your top off on a table, going frickin' apeshit.

Tim: Where I grew up, it was super-rural. No one had cars. It would only be a couple hundred miles, but I'd hitchhike the whole day to go see Chaos UK, Disorder, Heresy, or Ripcord. It such a huge, big deal. We live in San Francisco now. There's a straight edge scene. There's a garage scene. There's all these different scenes.

Dougie: There's no integration.

Tim: I mix with people who loved music. That was it. Our small group of people liked music.

Jason: I think all those people in those scenes think they're like that, though. I think that they think that they're open-minded about music, but they just end up gravitating towards each other.

Floyd: Some of it now—because we're looking back—you could be at one of these shows, and you remember the ten or twenty people who you see at all the shows, but you



WILL KINSER

forget all the other people. "Oh, they always show for the Wire show," this or that. You forget all the other people who only chose the one. I'll see it just from working the door. You know the people who show up, then you see them at another one. They go out to shows just because it gives them something to do. Also, I think when you get older, I don't see many straight edge shows anymore, basically, because I can't watch a show without a drink. Even when I go to Gilman, I need coffee or something.

Tim: The thing is that you have the choice. We grew up without a choice.

There was no choice. There was no scene. This scene thing blew my mind. I came to America for the first time and I was like, "Really? You can choose what bands you see? You're kidding me. I want to see fuckin' anything. It doesn't matter who it is or what it is."

Floyd: There was something else, too. You would go into shows blind, even if you knew the type of music, but you would not have heard the record. Now, you can go on the internet—and I'm guilty of it—I'll listen to a song. Half of 'em have videos before you decide to leave the house.

MUSIC HAS NO BOUNDARIES. LIKE THE UNIVERSE, MUSIC KEEPS ON GOING AND GOING AND GOING.

Tim: I had no idea that people could pick and chose. To me, Blyth Power and Napalm Death are the same thing. To me, it was everything else and punk. And everything in punk was in just a big, fuckin' bowl. I love Ripcord and Heresy, but I also loved The Sect and the Senseless Things. To me, they were the same. It happens today. I'm not at every show. I'll go and watch the Hex Dispensers. Then you go and watch Never Healed. Not one of the people from the other show is at that show, but it's still full. Where I came from, the same nine people were there no matter who fuckin' played. I don't know if that's good or bad. It's just what we knew. There was no distinction. When we started this band, there was no distinction between anything.

Jason: If you would have grown up in London, you would have had the same thing that we have.

Floyd: In cities—why bands go—you hit on how both shows will be full. So, the same nine people might be there. This is why bands hit the big cities: because there's another 150 people there.

Tim: The thing is that England and Ireland and Scotland, as a rule, you don't have the choice. It's not the big city shit, even if you grew up in a big city, like Leeds, Bradford, or Belfast: no choice.

Dougie: I still have vivid memories when Fugazi first played Belfast. I was working, doing the stage security. I remember having to hold the speakers 'cause there's a whole crew of studded leather jackets, Conflict patches, mohawks, climbin' on stage, just to hug Ian MacKaye. When I watch the videos of Fugazi in America, it's all clean cut. Backpacks. In Belfast, it was like a bunch of frickin' people from *Mad Max*, rockin' out to Fugazi. And, in the back are a bunch of joy-ridin' hoods, all smoking marijuana, a bunch of Belfast gangbangers, lovin' it. That's the whole economy of that scene.

Pete: Fugazi was kinda cool, the way they mixed it up. The first time I saw them was at Gilman St. and it was with Crash Worship and Pitchfork. Even out here, they pretty much

captured that group of different bands—Crash Worship was nothing like Fugazi—but everyone dug it. I was nuts for them.

Tim: Todd, I want some more dirt. I'm surprised by your information.

Todd: Not really dirt, Tim, but a piece of trivia. One of you was born in the area where the elevator was invented. Which one of you?

Jason: I think it's Belfast.

Tim: It isn't me.

Dougie: I thought the elevator was invented in Cleveland.

Pete: Sounds like it would be.

Todd: Final answer?

All: Dougie.

Todd: Nope. Tim. Cornish inventor.

Tim: I wasn't born in Cornwall. I was born in Zambia, in Africa.

Todd: Fuck.

Tim: My dad's a miner. Born in Zambia, moved to Cornwall when I was three.

Jason: So, your dad was there, raping the natural resources.

Tim: He was helping to build our economy. [laughter] He pumped some money back into the country we're currently sinking. So, yes. That's good, though. Was it really invented in Cornwall?

Jason: But I believe they called it "the lift."

Todd: [reading from notes] "In 1842, Cornish engineer Michael Loan gave a demonstration of the world's first-ever elevator at Gwennap near Redruth."

Tim: That's good, though. I never knew that.

Dougie: My only perception of Cornwall is a bunch of inbred rapists. We watched *Straw Dogs*.

Todd: Which one of you delivered meat?

Tim: Pete! Pete the meat!

Pete: That's an easy one.

Jason: And he continues to tell us he delivers meat.

Todd: You delivered in Chinatown. Did you ever seen any endangered otters being slaughtered or anything along those lines?

Pete: Saw a lot of turtles being chopped up, but that's everyday stuff down there, just going to the back rooms to deliver the stuff.

Dougie: He did see a guy in a big straw hat and electricity coming out of his hands. [laughter]

Pete: I became friends with one of the customers we delivered to and he pretended he went to Stanford and had a British accent, but I don't think he did. One day, he comes up; he gives me a stack of papers. He goes, "Check this out. I'm giving this to women. I want to meet 'em." I'm, "All right. Cool." I opened it up. It was full pictures of him in the alley with a boner. First of all, who took these? And then a full page of gibberish, of I don't know what. I still have those pictures to prove it.

Todd: Last "dirt"ish stuff. Who was a child model?

Tim: Pete!

Jason: So, you were a child model?

Pete: Yes.

Jason: For what?

Pete: In my grammar school days, I did a few JC Penney ads. A Macy's picture here and there.

Jason: So your parents made money off of you, huh?

Pete: I kept all that dough. I probably bought a skateboard or something.

Tim: Did you get a tattoo of a light bulb with... what does it say?

Jason: "Don't think. Have soul."

Tim: Is a tattoo that Pete has. [Pete pulls back his shirt.]

Todd: Wow, that's really faded.

Tim: Oh, I've got a good story about Dougie in the bathroom. I had free tickets to see the Green Day musical, *American Idiot*. I went and it was full of Berkeley gray-hair types with glasses and sandals. And these people did this full, fuckin' [makes high whistling sound and "sparkle fingers" with his hands] thing with Green Day. Karen, my wife, got me free tickets to see this musical. I can't do musicals, as a rule. In my head, it was a play with Green Day music, which is fine. I like plays. I can do that. We sat down and Karen said, "Just relax and take it easy." I'm like, "This is fucked up." The stage set was really cool. Old flyers.

It was so weird. There weren't any punks. It was just people watching a musical. When the curtain went up, this bunch of people jumped out and started singing Green Day songs and I laughed really loudly, out loud, "Wa hah!" Karen was like, "Whoa, whoa." [mimics his wife trying to get him to settle down.] We ended up really enjoying ourselves. People ask, "Should I go?" I'd be like, "I dunno. I have no idea. It was really fun." But when we left, there were all these young kids, and there's this big blackboard that people could write on, like "Green Day changed my life." I left the bathroom and said, "Oh, I need to go write on that," and Karen, my wife, said, "No, you don't need to write on that." Because what I was going to write on that was two stories. One was how Green Day did LSD with Dougie's roommates.

Dougie: They wrote *on* my Soundgarden records. Disrespected frickin' Chris Cornell.

Tim: And had to shit in bags.

Dougie: They didn't have to shit in bags. We actually got a bathroom installed before they came. NOFX shat in bags. Gorilla Biscuits shat in bags. Quicksand shat in bags and loved it. Anyone shat in bags back in the day.

Jason: That'll be the name of our first record, *Shat in the Bag*.

Tim: I'm glad I didn't do the shit in a bag story, because that wouldn't have been true. The other story that was true was on that same tour. They stayed with a friend of mine, Dean, who was in a band called The Cowboy Killers, who, in my eyes, is the best English hardcore band, ever. And when they stayed with him on that same tour, Tré Cool, the drummer, was staying up late and my friend Dean had a kid at the time. He went to Tré Cool, "Let's just keep it down. Family, y'know." So Tré carried on, talking. So Dean came down but with a samurai sword to his neck and said, "If you make any more noise, I'm going to cut your voice box out." And that made it into the Green Day biography. Incidentally, Dean ended up going to prison for putting a Roman sword to his neighbor's neck.

Todd: Everyone has to answer these two questions. What's your age and what's your current occupation?

Dougie: By the time this interview comes out, I'll be forty. I'm a house painter.

Tim: Thirty-seven. Film editor.

Jason: Thirty-eight and I'm a journalist.

Pete: After next week, thirty-eight, and I'm a gas serviceman for Pacific Gas and Electric Company.

Todd: So, with that, Pete, how did you get to designing a lounge in a fancy hotel?

Pete: My wife is an artist and an art teacher. There was a time she was working for this woman who owns all these hotels. My wife did a skateboard lounge, and I'm her sidekick, so we worked together.

Dougie: "Dougie, can you do stripes in this hotel lobby?"

Pete: Absolutely. It was the best. You've got to call your painter friend.

Todd: Jason, what story did you break?

Jason: The story I'm most proud of is one

WHEN YOU GET TO A CERTAIN AGE AND YOU'RE A CREATIVE PERSON, YOU'RE LIKE, "HOW CAN I MAKE A FUCKIN' LIVING AND STILL NOT HATE MYSELF?"

I recently did about all these forgotten, abandoned mercury mines that are in the coast ranges of California that are polluting into the watershed, including Clear Lake. I do investigative reporting.

Todd: You're an Associated Press guy.

Jason: I do some breaking news stuff, but, mostly, right now, I do features writing.

Todd: Do your pieces get licensed out?

Jason: *LA Times*, *Times* of London, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*.

Dougie: *Belfast Telegraph*?

Jason: Yeah. I think so. I look online, mostly, for my stories these days. Back in the day when you worked for AP, they used to send you print clips, but, now, you get links to stories that are featured on the website, not just a random robot url.

Todd: So, you actually go into work every day as reporter.

Jason: Yeah, that's what I do. Mostly, it's environmental justice stuff I've been doing the last couple years.

Jason: My work is very different than my time in the band, which is one of the reasons I love it so much because I have to focus and be serious all the time, as do all of us at work.

Tim: A lot of what I do, I really enjoy. I'm really lucky that I cut TV commercials that people think are pretty throwaway. There's a lot of money in it. And I get to work with my friends and make stuff.

Todd: Give me a solid example.

Tim: I just did a PG & E commercial that was kind of a big deal. It was with a director I knew and it was shot on film. It looked great. I worked with people and the connecting point we all had was music. The spot was great already, so we cut it and it was pretty easy to do. While I was mixing the commercial, the guy I was working with is in this band called Ape and he got one of his friends to do the music. And when I went down to L.A. to do the music mix, the guy who did the music was the bassist of the Plugz.

Todd: The Plugz played with Bob Dylan for a bit.

Tim: Yes, he did. He was telling me about Los Illegals and The Zeros and X. And then he told me about how Bob Dylan paid the Plugz to jam with him for six months.

Todd: They played *Letterman* together.

Tim: And there's bootlegs of them playing. Apparently, Bob Dylan's son was really

into The Plugz. And that's what's good about my job. I get to hang out with cool people and do something that is fun and get paid for it.

Todd: You've done a lot of bicycle videos.

Tim: Yep. I cut bike movies. The video for our band is out in the Ethernet somewhere because our friend Jon wanted to do it. Advertising is sort of this odious thing, but if you can make something fun out of it and have a good time, get paid for it...

Jason: So many of our friends are in advertising. When you get to a certain age and you're a creative person, you're like, "How can I make a fuckin' living and still not hate myself?"

Todd: And also make a living while supporting children, a family, and not being a deadbeat fuckin' asshole or ripping people off.

Todd: Dougie, what is the work you're most proud of?

Dougie: Eighty to ninety percent of the jobs I do are high end. I've worked on paint jobs that have been over a quarter of a million dollars. The Gretches, guitar and drums, painted their house. Jonathan Ive, the inventor of the iPod. These are jobs I love doing. These are people I respect, as well. To get to paint their houses and have 'em come up to you after, and go, "What you've done to my house is amazin'." It's taking painting to a new level. It keeps us focused. It keeps us thinking. It's not just slapping paint on a wall.

Jason: Also, the houses here are fuckin' ornate.

Dougie: They're so intricate. San Francisco offers you way more chances to be talented. This job isn't actually looked at as being a talented job. It's a trade that's the easiest trade to do, but with San Francisco, that's not the case... By the way, I hate my job. [laughter] Freakin' print that.

Todd: So, your uncle was in the IRA?

Dougie: Oh, thanks, Todd. Uncle Bo and Uncle Duke, done six years in the Long Kesh (An English prison for military prisoners). My granddad, on my Dad's side, was quartermaster of the IRA. The quartermaster, basically, is the guy who puts your "duck caddy" together, gives you a knife, and tells you to go out there and kill British soldiers. He gives you your pea shooter. "Go out there and do it, kid. Whack away."

Jason: Wouldn't you want a Dougan telling you that? It would just seem okay. "This is the right thing to do!"

Dougie: I also had a great uncle. He took part in a massive ambush that killed fourteen cops. We have a lot of political history in our family. The North of Ireland, it's just a small, small tiny province where everybody who lived there is affected by what happened there. You have a relative who's done this and a relative who's done that. Many have been the opposing side of both relatives.

Todd: So, completely shifting gears, how do you separate the two versions of yourself?

Tim: There aren't two versions of myself.

Todd: You would sit down in front of your kids, drinking heavily and smoking weed?

Tim: No, you make choices. There aren't two versions of myself. The same version is



MIKE MARTIN

drinking all night in San Diego. When I'm home with my kids, I'm home with my kids. It's not a different version of me. It's balance. I love drinking and I love other stuff, but my kids are little guys who need someone who isn't high taking care of them. Yeah, I drink a lot. But my kids can't take care of themselves.

Jason: You're a good dad.

Tim: But I don't ever do it on my own with them. I always do it if there's someone else who isn't. My mum once said to me, "If you hadn't met your wife, you'd probably be dead." I'm like, "Ahh, harsh." But, the thing is that I'm lucky. I'm in a situation with a

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wife I love very much, who loves me. Me and Pete both have two kids. I've got a real job and a wife and I do my shit. I do what I do. I like to get really fucked up and that's a given, but I take care of my kids. But I'm the same person. My kids listen to the same music as me. I don't have two lives. I'm not Jekyll and Hyde.

Todd: So, how do you have the two different modes? Pete, The Loudmouths toured a lot. You looped America and Europe and the band was definitely known to party.

Pete: My wife, I didn't meet her through punk rock or skateboarding, and I've been with her for almost twenty years. Lisa and I have been together for a long time. I'm used to doing my thing, and she's not always in it. So, I've kind of grown up with that, in a sense. But having kids, I gotta say, it makes you look at life differently. I don't go home and pretend that I don't skateboard. They know everything I do, and that's a big part of my life.

Dougie: But they love that about you, as well.

Pete: They love it. And it's fun. At least for me—I don't know about for every one—I

Jason: Most people struggle with the work and family balance. You guys struggle with work, family, and that third thing.

Floyd: It also brings us back full circle to why you formed. You needed that outlet, whereas before you didn't have it.

Pete: As a matter of fact, if we didn't live our lives like this, we wouldn't have this band right now. Maybe we would have started a band, but, by now, it probably would have broken up, "Oh, we're over it."

Tim: I think the kids kind of keep us in this world.

Pete: It's that once-a-week, going to practice, when you're like, "Oh, can't wait to go to practice." But, believe me, we don't want to do it more than once a week. I couldn't imagine practicing twice a week.

Dougie: Wednesday night's like Saturday night. Come to the practice room, seeing these guys.

Jason: Being in a band is a shitty fuckin' endeavor at this age. Like, a traditional band. We tailored this band for us. I never wanted to be in a band again. I'm only in the band

thing we ever asked to do was play Budget Rock this year.

Dougie: We have asked for bands to be on the bill with us. We asked Timmy Hefner (Chaos In Tejas organizer) to put on the Marked Men.

Tim: He asked us what it would take. When we did the 625 thing (the split 45 12" with Giant Haystacks), Max was like, "I'm not going to be there, so here's the stuff you've got to send out." We're just like, "Okay!" Nope. We haven't sent shit to anyone. It's not anything like we're trying to be better than that. It's just pure laziness and time. We haven't got time.

Todd: I wouldn't say laziness. You have your priorities.

Tim: Our priorities is a good time.

Todd: What's the best advice you've gotten about continuing to do your creativity?

Pete: This guy Sam Cunningham... remember Blockhead skateboards? Sacramento, old guy. I liked to skate with him, and a long time ago he said, "Some days you just don't want to do it and just

OUR PRIORITIES IS A GOOD TIME.

have to cut some things out. I realize how selfish I am, in a small way. Just like, "I want to go out and do this tonight," which never was an issue. Now, if my wife's been working all day, when she gets off, she's ready for me to watch the kids. I could be a dick and be, "Nope. I'm going out tonight." Or, you can make that decision, be like, "Okay. I'm watching the kids now." It is give and take. I don't know if that sounds cliché.

Todd: It sounds responsible.

Tim: Part of it is getting older, but having kids highlights that. You zone into having fun. When I go somewhere, I'm fuckin' having a good time. I don't give a shit. I'm not involved in scene politics, or who likes who, or who doesn't like who, or what's cool. I have a fuckin' window, and I'm in it. It makes you appreciate your good times better because you have less of them. If I'm going out, it's not, "Ahh, fuck. I'm tired." My thing is that it's planned. [Makes screaming noises.]

Dougie: "Small Man, Big House" is about that whole scenario. It's about being into something, then you have kids and a wife, and you go, "That was my old life. This is my new life. I'm tucking my shirt in. It's done." There's a balance. It's hard and it's stressful, but you can get a balance.

Tim: It's totally doable.

because of these guys. I like hanging out with them. I wouldn't see you guys if I wasn't in the band.

Tim: I was at work the other day. There's a guy I work with who does music for commercials and he said, "You know, I was thinking about getting in a band, but I don't really want to be bothered with trying to get on things and pushing things forward, trying to push your LP." And I just looked at him, like, "What the fuck you talking about?" For me, my band's a release. He's like, "It's hard work being in a band."

Jason: Most people form the band with specific intents. "I wanna make a record. I wanna tour." I have to say that Tim is the engine behind any of the shit we actually get done in this band, other than songwriting. We all do that. Tim organized getting our record done. But it's all come pretty organically, which is the first time I've ever been in a band where that's happened. People ask us to play shows. People ask us to come to Texas. People ask us to come to San Diego. People ask us to go to Portland. People ask us if they can put out our record.

Tim: We've never done anything we haven't been asked to do.

Jason: And that's awesome.

Tim: We're slow moving. Actually, the only

don't do it. And other days you do." It sounds very simple, but it totally made sense. 'Cause I got worried about it. "I'm not in the mood to skate today. Does that mean I'm not into it anymore?" Same, exact thing with music. Those are my two creative things. Some days, I'm not in the mood to go listen to new bands. You're not in the mood that day. Then, other days, "I can't wait to go rock out. I can't wait to go see a band." Sometimes, you go to a show and you're like, "Man, this was one of my favorite bands at one time, and I'm not in the mood right now." Another day, you go see some other band, and you're just stoked to see someone strumming a guitar. You're like, "That's creative. I love it." Take it for what it is. For, as when you're younger, you're on fire twenty-four hours. You're taking it in. So, for getting older, that's good advice.





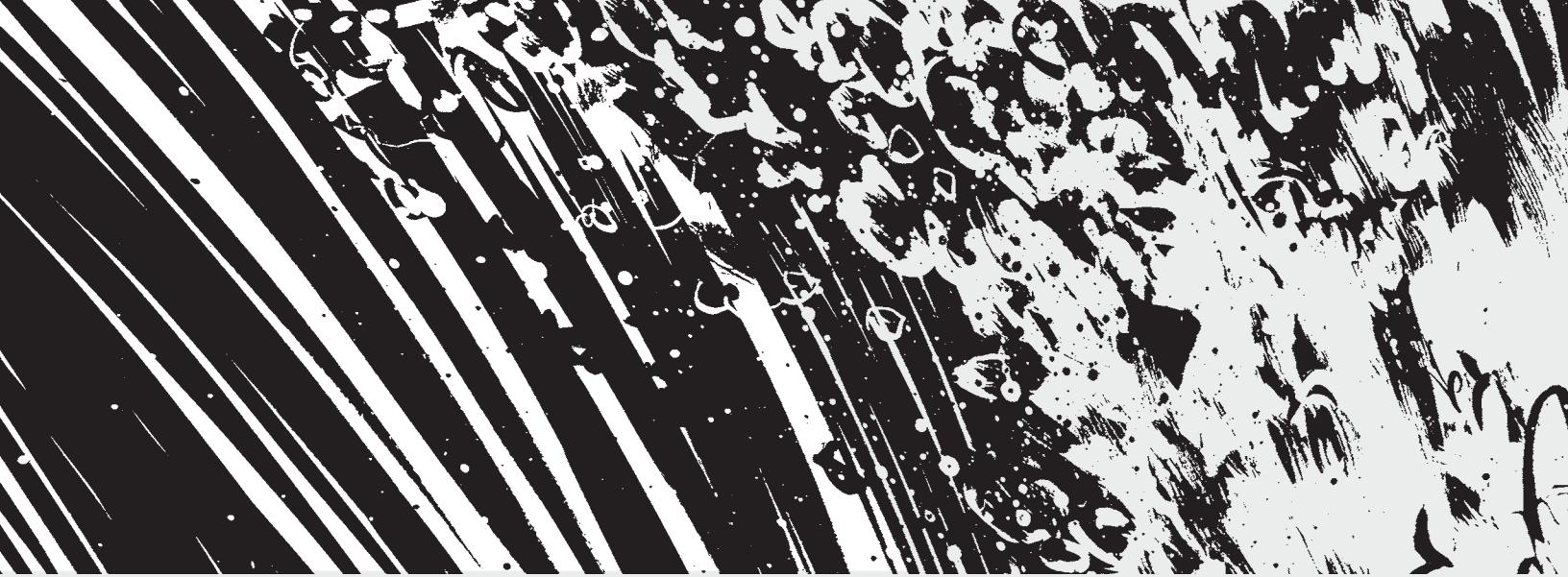
THE LUMBERJACK MORDAM MUSIC GROUP DEBACLE PART II

BY TODD TAYLOR

ILLUSTRATION BY KIYOSHI NAKAZAWA

Last issue, we followed the Lumberjack Mordam Music Group through its formative years, covering the buyout of the respected Mordam music distributor, the hiring and firing of a highly paid chief operating officer, and the incremental increase of Warner's pressure and influence over LMMG. Deep turmoil bubbled beneath LMMG's public statements of its hardship, which were sugared over as being merely a refection of the music industry as a whole. Due to lackluster sales, loans—secured for both the original Mordam purchase and from Warner—were becoming past due. Sales of music had to trickle through many channels before reaching LMMG's

independent music labels. Interest and principle had to be paid on the loans. Rent, utilities, and bills had to be paid. Employees relied on LMMG for paychecks. Often last in line to be paid were the record companies that provided the music that brought revenues in to LMMG in the first place.



Dirk Hemsath had left Lumberjack's longtime headquarters in Ohio to pursue other music-related projects in New York, leaving the day-to-day operations to his employees.

THE FORESHADOWING OF A BUSINESS ABOUT TO GO DOWN

Ryan Canavan, Hex Records

"My contract with LMMG was a weird thing. At one point I was trying to leave because they were so behind on paying me and wouldn't allow it because I, apparently, had to ask them three months before the contract expiration. Apparently, I was a week too late and they automatically renewed it for another three years.

"I want to point out, though, the actual employees at LMMG at the end were nothing short of courteous and upstanding guys who were overwhelmed with all the work and demands in front of them. While Dirk was calling the shots in NYC, these guys did the best they could with the limited manpower they had in Toledo.

"There were at least two instances in which I had to bring up going to a lawyer to them because they were over six months behind on paying me. This occurred the last year they were around, but I became more understanding when I realized there were basically only two employees working there and trying to run everything! I felt bad for these guys who had to keep things afloat for over fifty labels, so I was patient with them, and I know they did the best they could."

Mike Park, Asian Man Records

"LMMG never notified Asian Man that we wouldn't be paid, but I definitely got some warnings from the plethora of employees being terminated. LMMG seemed to be doing a good job at paying me partial amounts. I agreed to a payment plan where they paid off some of their debt a little each month, and it was going good for the last twelve months. I did have talks with Dirk. I met with him in person along with Jello Biafra from Alternative Tentacles. I think Dirk was always trying to be optimistic about the situation, and it did feel like we would be able to overcome it with a positive cash flow."

Bill Plaster, Dr. Strange Records

"At first, during the last year or so, LMMG asked all labels to be patient and/or take a compromise on payments. Basically, they were trying to get more time from us. I was lucky, being a store as well, to get some of what was owed in other labels' merchandise that was distributed through LMMG. Most others were not so lucky. All in all, most everyone *except* owner Dirk were pretty nice and upfront, especially Jason White and Dan Phillips. Good guys."

Lee Joseph, Dionysus Records

"I was getting paid mostly on time, though I had to send a few emails every month to make sure of it. Before things fell apart, several people there—mostly the people who started the Independent Label Collective (ILC)—were very helpful and great to work with... treated me really well under some really bad conditions!"

Che Brooks, Sales Rep, LMMG Distribution

"At the beginning of 2008, I remember sending Dirk this scathing email about the company—how were we doing and asked him point blank, 'Do you even still care?' I got a weak response about a week later. We were down to less than ten employees, but we had families and people who depended on us, and if this thing was tanking, I thought we needed to know.

"Unfortunately, Dirk is possibly the worst communicator in my entire work-related history. He just didn't care anymore after all of the key labels left and we were stuck running his business for the last two years. Thankfully for him, those of us left gave a shit about how we handled ourselves and were professional until the end because that's how we did things. Those of us left were experienced and happy to handle three times the amount of work we were hired for because we loved our jobs and loved selling and living music.

"Dirk is a great A&R rep and can find talent all day long. He is horrible when it comes to running a business and communicating with his employees.

"When LMMG failed to pay a label, they left—BOMP, Alternative Tentacles, Eulogy, Facedown, etc. Every time that happened, we lost revenue. There was no replacing these size labels, so all we could do was shrink and shrink and shrink until there was nothing left. Add into the apathy Hemsath showed, and the company circled the drain the last two years of its existence.

"When he let me go in November of 2008, there were only maybe three to four people left. I think he laid off two to three people at once and made the others part time. His logic was he was going to have his wife and sister-in-law come in and run the company, while on Doghouse's payroll, and they would do it free of charge. Neither of them were excited about the prospects and, really, had no idea what to do. I knew right then and there this place was going down. He paid me through my end, including my paid time off, so I have no complaints there.

"Dirk is a lousy businessman and horrible communicator, a bad combination for anyone you want running your company. That was one of the reasons why he was never around and left the rest of us to run the sinking ship while he did other things."

Patrick Boissel, Bomp/Alive Records

"We gave LMMG an ultimatum and prepared ourselves for the move to another distributor. The thing was that no one

“WE WERE DOWN TO LESS THAN TEN EMPLOYEES... AND IF THIS THING WAS TANKING, I THOUGHT WE NEEDED TO KNOW.”

Che Brooks, Sales Rep, LMMG Distribution

really wanted to make such a move. It is economically painful and some labels never recover from it. We tried to soldier on as long as possible, but the writing was on the wall and we knew we would have to get out of there at one point or another. Dirk claimed their cash problems would eventually be solved. Of course, at the same time, he was desperately trying to sell the company. We got all of our stock back and Dirk promised to work out a payment plan. He then disappeared, stopped answering the phone and returning emails. After six frustrating months, we brought in a lawyer who managed to collect some of the money he owed us.”

Mike Beer, Beer City Records

“The first deal they made with WEA actually wasn’t bad. It worked. Then when Lumberjack had money problems they penned the new deal with WEA. They didn’t mention that to Beer City at all. We noticed discrepancies on our statement and then we asked them about it. When they told us, we informed Dirk that he had to pay us back ‘cause that was not part of our deal; that any changes in our contract had to be approved in writing by us.

“Payments were late or didn’t come unless you put your foot down. They weren’t paying a lot of folks for digital. There were a bunch of labels that left that were owed big, big money. I think lots of labels knew what was going on but got scared and didn’t do anything about these things. We did. Luckily, I knew someone high up there who thought the situation the company was in was ridiculous and they would always tell me exactly what was going on regardless of whether or not they were supposed to. We left and made sure we got paid every penny. From what I heard, lots of other labels just sat and waited to see what would happen and got really screwed in the end.

“After finding out from Dirk how deep the company was in, I didn’t see any way they would get out of it and choose to leave. The official sever date was January 1, 2008.”

Jason White, General Manager, LMMG Distribution

“At the end, I think Dirk did okay by the few employees that were still there. I mean, a ton of people lost money in IRA matchings and some people where abruptly let go as a result of financial mistakes they did not make. But, in comparison to how the labels were compensated, I think employees were taken care of moderately well. I think if Dirk had involved himself more in LMMG over the years, you might not be telling this story now.”

Che Brooks, Sales/Marketing Manager, LMMG Distribution

“The best-selling labels at the end were Asian Man Records and Sympathy For the Record Industry—money-wise, probably \$80,000-\$100,000 per month, and in the neighborhood of 10,000 units.”

Skylar Suorez, Asian Man Records

“They always treated us really well, right up to the day they stopped paying us.”

In a December 2008 posting on Digitalmusic.com both Dirk Hemmeh and Jason White confided that LMMG was facing difficulties indicative of a bad economy and a struggling music industry. Both stressed that, although adjustments were being made and hard decisions lay ahead, there was no intention of shutting down LMMG. LMMG also sent out many reassuring emails to labels under its umbrella stating that, despite rumors, they were not going out of business.

Charles Cardello, Bifocal Media

“We released a Melvins/ Brian Walsby CD/book title in April 2009, after months of debating a switch to Redeye. Jason White and Dan Phillips convinced me to stay on board with Lumberjack even though we were getting offers from other companies who seemed to be much better off, financially speaking. *Manchild 4/Pick Your Battles* sold around 700 copies the month it was released.

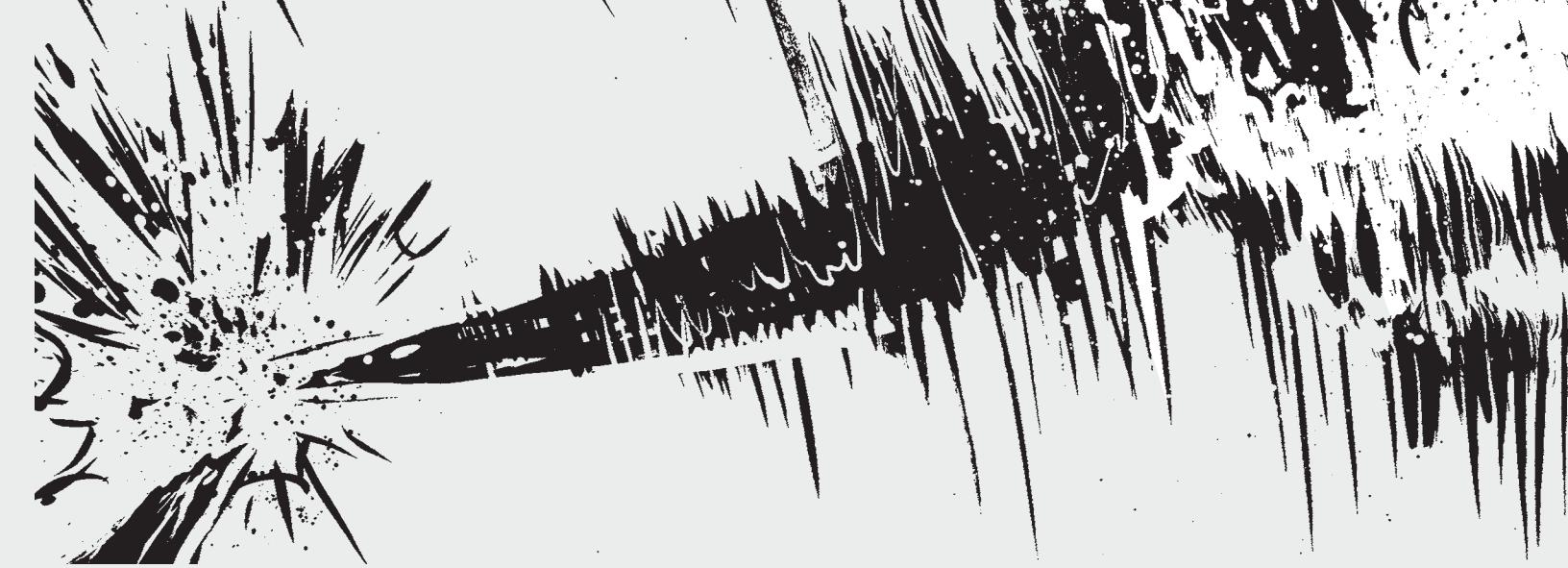
“Dialog between Jason, Dan, and me stayed open throughout this whole ordeal. Even as we started to run out of money to run Bifocal, I would call and beg them for information, money, or to get our catalog back. I was always told that the ball was in Dirk’s court. All three of them seemed very sympathetic to the mess they had gotten me into. Keep in mind that the dialog was open before I knew the depth of their financial trouble, as we were about to jump ship with a big title that was going to cost us a ton to produce.

“No one ever told me not to send any new titles over. Had any of them said, ‘Hey man, things are looking really bleak,’ I would have pulled everything a year before. At first, I was told that they would not be doing physical distribution anymore but they would continue to pay for titles that were being sold. The checks and sales reports didn’t come and we really started to freak. I know we were still being paid long after other labels had stopped receiving payment, as I’ve spoken with a ton of them. Then they just stopped paying us after twelve years of working with them.

“I just wish they would have alerted me to the situation prior to us shipping a brand new Brian Walsby book and Melvins CD. There could have been a much happier ending. It took over three months to get everything switched over to Redeye and we actually had to pay for the shipping of our stuff from WEA, even though they owed us for over six months of steady sales. We’d had a great relationship with Lumberjack up until this year when the checks stopped rolling in.”

Jason White, General Manager, LMMG Distribution

“I did not know, at the time, LMMG would actually be closing. The original reasoning and concepts that led to LMMG closing were brought up in March of 2009 and consisted of essentially dropping any in-house physical distribution, if continuing any at all with WEA, and focusing on being a digital aggregator. This would have lowered LMMG’s revenue volume, but killed 90%+ of the operating expenses, allowing almost all profits to go towards paying debt. The chances of this being a permanent fix were slim, but should have allowed current royalties to be paid timely and make progress on backed debt. The



progress on overall debt would have been very slow and very less than ideal, but, in theory, could have worked, or at least lowered the final damage.

"LMMG was going to be left with almost no employees, as some other friends, labels, and I were going to leave LMMG to start the Independent Label Collective. So, with next-to-no staff and some key labels leaving, together we tried to find something that would work and keep LMMG around, despite these pending losses. Unfortunately, WEA lost interest in these plans and it all fell apart. In early June, Dirk was forced with a decision to shut down.

"In terms of LMMG's financial situation over the last few months, there was little to be done, so any more substantial efforts to do right by the labels would, unfortunately for Dirk, fall on his shoulders personally."

THE DAY LMMG UNPLUGGED THE PHONE

In May 2009, LMMG was distributing 116 independent music labels. Those labels represented thousands of independent bands. It had been a business for fifty-one months.

*Email to labels, posted to Punknews.org, 7/7/2009
Dirk Hemsath, LMMG CEO*

"I want to give everyone an idea of where things stand with LMMG as of now and where things will be in the future. At this point, LMMG will not be able to continue to provide distribution services for labels. We had hopes for the last several months that we'd be able to find a way to move forward but the triple hits of an expensive merger, a dying business, and a bad economy have made it impossible. We are hoping to be able to get some money to labels, but I'm not sure how much or when, as we have to try and collect money from customers. If you have not yet moved your distribution to another company, please make arrangements to do so as soon as possible."

Dave Johnson, Jailhouse Records

"LMMG essentially shut down operations in early May 2009. Cut their phone lines, email addresses, etc. They claimed to be doing perfectly fine and still operating as a distributor until July when we publicly called him out on everything. They continued to accept new stock. They signed labels up until May. They did everything that a distributor does, except they had cut off all communication with their labels."

LMMG.com, July 15, 2009

"As you may have heard by now, we will unfortunately no longer be able to provide the services we have been giving our labels and accounts over the last 20 years."

Jason White, General Manager, LMMG Distribution

"I would say twenty-five to thirty of the labels knew what was about to happen prior to that email that was posted on Punknews, but I think he only reached out to five to ten of them personally before the announcement. I could be wrong, though."

On April 20, 2009, Lumberjack Mordam Music Group Inc., Charter No: 1510229, was notified by the Ohio Secretary of State that it had cancelled LMMG's Articles of Incorporation, prohibiting LMMG from attempting to exercise "any powers, privileges, or franchises." LMMG failed to either file tax reports and/or pay any such taxes to the state. It is officially a "business not in good standing," according to the state of Ohio. On July 30, 2009 LMMG was taken to court by one of its creditors, The Huntington National Bank.

Maddy Tight Pants, Reporter

"If a person owns an LLC, they are protected from a lot of personal litigation, e.g. being sued. In other words, their personal assets—those separate from the business—for the most part cannot be seized. This appears to include situations when the business is 'not in good standing.' So the owner would likely not have the company's debt transferred to his personal debt.

"A company that is 'not in good standing,' has not satisfied its state requirements and tax obligations. I'd guess that a company 'not in good standing' could file for bankruptcy, since bankruptcy could easily involve not paying taxes due to lack of funds."

THE AFTERMATH OF LMMG

Ryan Canavan, Hex Records

"I've received a lot of help from the actual employees who were at LMMG in the aftermath of all this, insofar as getting my business in order and moving on. I mean, they didn't have the power to get me the money I'm still owed, but they kept me up to speed on what was happening and assisted me with getting back on track.

"There was talk right when they went under, and a number of labels—including my own—discussed the possibility of a class-action lawsuit. But once I found out how much that would cost and the time it would take versus the money I was owed, it wouldn't have made much sense."

Mike Park, Asian Man Records

"I just think it is disappointing to stick by a company and to learn that they've basically made so many bad decisions that they've dug themselves in such a hole that you are left in the cold. I am out over \$48,000 which, for me, is an insanely large amount. For the last few months, I've really scaled down the hours of my employees and have been doing everything I

“IF DIRK HAD INVOLVED HIMSELF MORE IN LMMG OVER THE YEARS, YOU MIGHT NOT BE TELLING THIS STORY NOW.”

Jason White, General Manager, LMMG Distribution

can to cut costs and make sound decisions for survival. I was able to get my digital back and am currently going through Independent Online Digital Alliance (IODA). As far as my stock, I believe I have everything back for that, too.”

Jason White, General Manager, LMMG Distribution

“Warner never ‘owned’ any labels/artists rights via LMMG. They were just a middle man. At this time (September 2009), I am pretty sure they still have digital content going through them, but unless I am unaware of something, it’s because these last labels have not asked LMMG to take down their digital yet. Why? Who the fuck knows.”

Dan Phillips, LMMG Head Of Operations, Co-Owner, Cavity Records 10/12/09

“All digital rights have been given back to the labels months ago. There was some problems for a bit with WEA. WEA handled/delivered all of LMMG’s digital content. Once they knew LMMG was closing, they wouldn’t let me pull anything without a change of distribution notice for each label, even for labels that were out of their contracts with LMMG. The problem with this was that most of these smaller labels didn’t have new distribution, but they wanted their digital pulled and away from LMMG, rightfully so.

“I brought this issue up with the person I was dealing with at WEA, basically asking her what I was supposed to do to pull content from labels that didn’t have new distribution. She would never directly answer my question and it took forever for them to pull all the content. From my perspective, it was a bullshit way of them trying to keep as much LMMG content up as long as possible to make more money. They also made it so Dirk had to personally email them with the takedowns. Before, I would email them and just tell them to take stuff down and they would do it without any change of distro notice at all. So, basically, I was formatting the takedown templates and sending stuff to Dirk and he was just forwarding it to WEA. It was a huge pain in the ass for a few different reasons.

“As for any lingering issues, I know that some labels—including mine and Jason’s—have a few titles that are still waiting to be taken down to this day. Every time I inquire about them to WEA, I don’t get an answer back. I honestly don’t know if it’s WEA or the DSP (digital signal processing) itself that’s failing to comply.”

Dave Johnson, Jailhouse Records, 10/2/09

“LMMG did end up pulling my digital. Ironically, it happened about four days before we spoke the other day. The only way I was able to get it from them was to have it transferred by another physical distributor. The cease and desist didn’t work. Legal threats didn’t work. Contacting WEA and the Warner division didn’t work. Seems the only way to get it out of their hands was to get it to another distributor. So it is still up, but through ILC, and not directly. I did end up putting up five of our albums ourselves through Tunecore in hopes that the various services—iTunes, etc.—would not put up the same

album twice, and that worked. Unfortunately, digital has become such an important part of revenue that no distributor is really willing to part with it. Anyway, just wanted to let you know Lumberjack did in fact transfer our digital over to ILC.”

Ryan Canavan, Hex Records

“Hopefully, at this point, all my digital stuff is squared away with my new distributor, MVD, and no longer being paid out to Lumberjack, who may have been collecting on some of that stuff for up to six months without paying me a dime. To date (early September 2009), WEA still has a ton of my records, and I have no idea how I’m going to get them all back. In order to get anything from them, they are demanding shipping payment up front and would also put a label like mine on the very backburner of their shipping list. Additionally, Lumberjack is not doing anything about this. I actually had to go to Lumberjack in Toledo and get everything they had there that was mine so I could expedite getting things moving along so I wasn’t in distro limbo for too long. Who knows what will happen with all my stuff over at WEA.”

Matt Rudzinski, Tribunal Records

“Well, I got what I could out of LMMG up until the very end. Most of the stock is at the Independent Label Collective now with only WEA’s remaining to be obtained... Now I just need to get the straggling physical catalog back. The digital catalog has already been claimed and moved to ILC. It was the first thing I did. I halted LMMG from selling it anymore and reclaimed it. I am trying to get back on my feet. Keeping my label afloat is number one for me. It seemed like a big chore trying to fight WEA for the money. I mean if we—all of the labels distributed through LMMG—could all come together and go after them, it would be great.”

Jason White, co-owner of Cavity Records

“We were distributed by LMMG from early 2008 until May or so of 2009. Our best selling artists to date are NORTH, Giants, and Year Of No Light. We lost money like everyone else. Since LMMG stopped reporting digital after May, we do not have a set amount of losses, but estimate between \$1,500 - \$2,000, mostly in digital revenue.”

Bill Plaster, Dr. Strange

“They owe me over \$12,000.”

Avi Ehrlich, Springman Records

“LMMG owes me just under \$15,000 for the sale of physical product, not the product itself, just the money for its sale. I never gave them my digital.”

Kate Hiltz, Chunksah Records

“I’m not sure how I feel about full disclosure since they owe us so much money.”



Lee Joseph, Dionysus Records

"I am currently owed a substantial amount. Nope. They're not negotiating with me. I want my money."

Charles Cardello, Bifocal Media

"I've put everything into this little company and this could very well be the beginning of the end of it."

Darren Walters, Jade Tree Records

"I don't really like to talk about this entire ordeal because I feel burned by many of the main people involved. I'm sad to say that this situation has left a bitter taste in my mouth and left Jade Tree still picking up the pieces."

Ruth Schwartz, CEO Mordam Distribution

"I didn't get paid in full for the sale of Mordam. It was a seven year note Dirk was carrying and he defaulted a year-and-a-half in. He owes me more money than anyone."

Che Brooks, Sales/Marketing Manager, LLMG Distribution

"Dirk just won't pay labels until they come after him and then he'll probably settle."

Jason White, General Manager, LMMG Distribution

"The concept of laying this beast down with little to no effort to do right by people is not the way to roll."

Dirk Hemsath, CEO LMMG, 10/12/09

"For myself, I have received very little financial benefit since 2006 when I was paid a modest salary. I received no salary or financial benefit in 2007, 2008, or 2009. Furthermore, my label Doghouse loaned LMMG a significant amount of money that has not been repaid and is still owed a large balance for sales when, all said, is well in the six figures."

Three LMMG employees—**Jason White, Dan Phillips, and Adam Bartlett**—left to form the Independent Label Collective. All three also run labels that are distributed by ILC.

Che Brooks, Former Sales/Marketing Manager, LMMG Distribution

"Talking to the people at ILC would get you the inside scoop, because they really spearheaded the final blow to LMMG by leaving to start something new that is sorta a return to the label group concept of the old Mordam."

Jason White, co-founder ILC Distribution

"I am no longer an employee, but still do some minimal work for LMMG for free, mainly doing what little I can to get labels any accounting/reports, stock, and anything else outside of

getting them paid. I made the decision to leave and let Dirk know in March 2009. I left voluntarily."

DIRK HEMSATH, POST-LMMG

Dirk Hemsath, CEO LMMG

"At this point, we've done our best with the few resources we've had to wind things down and help get product back to labels and help labels move to new distribution situations. We are in the process of putting the company into bankruptcy. At that point, the trustee assigned by the court will deal with everything going forward. Any money collected will be dealt with by the trustee.

"Again, I can't tell you how sad this is for me and I know in my heart that myself and others tried to keep this company going as long as we could, hoping that the business would get better and come back enough to put everyone in a better spot. The reality is that there was just too much stacked against it."

Che Brooks, Former Sales/Marketing Manager, LMMG Distribution

"I think Dirk cared if only for his reputation, for his pocket book, and to pay off his bills. He didn't care about the labels, and he didn't care about his employees and what that job meant to us. Again, he's a lousy businessman, a great purveyor of talent, a decent person, but a lousy president and CEO."

Ryan Canavan, Hex Records

"Dirk manages this musician called NeverShoutNever—some MySpace band or something—and still runs this group's digital distribution through Lumberjack. I know this because the guys who worked there discussed how they have to pay on that stuff. They reported it was \$70,000 in one month alone."

Bill Plaster, Dr. Strange Records

"Last I heard, Dirk is a manager of a pseudo-'punk,' radio-friendly band. And he actually makes money! Lots. Several tens of thousands of dollars were given to him from Warner Brothers. He's some sort of 'talent' scout for shitty bands. Crazy, huh?"

Jason White, co-owner ILC Distribution

"Dirk has worked with Warner Brothers on acquisitions of some of the artists from his label and/or management company."

Dirk Hemsath, CEO LMMG, 10/09/09

"I would like to use this opportunity to apologize to those who were hurt because of the demise of LMMG, but I hope everyone will see that I am among those. Regardless of what is said about myself or my handling of LMMG, I am proud of what it was and many people dedicated themselves to trying to make the

“THE REALITY IS THAT THIS WAS A CHAIN OF MANY UNFORTUNATE EVENTS... THIS WAS NOT ONE PERSON’S FAULT.”

Dirk Hemsath, CEO LMMG, 10/09/09

company work. The concept and realization of it for many years was a great thing, helping out dozens of labels while employing many talented and hard working people. I wish that it could have ended differently and I hope that those labels hurt in the process will be able to pick up and keep releasing great music in a new and difficult era.

“The reality is that this was a chain of many unfortunate events with some bad decisions made by many people in an industry that dropped off a cliff over the last five years, in an economy that has been in the decline for the last several years. This was not one person’s fault.

“What broke the company’s back were several things, including: 1) The former landlord in Sacramento sued LMMG for back rent in the six figure dollar amount for the facility that we had to move out of to stay in business. 2) The bank that held the line of credit decided they wanted it all repaid at once and, in fact, already have a judgment against both LMMG and myself. 3) Most of the key employees had left for various reasons. With these three immediate issues, there was no way to continue. Any one would have been enough to force LMMG out of business; with all three, it was hopeless.”

LMMG, OCTOBER, 2009

Although LMMG informed its labels it was no longer in the music distribution business, as of press time, it has not declared bankruptcy or made any formal announcement that it completely ceased conducting business.

Jason White, co-owner ILC Distribution, 10/13/09

“Yes, LMMG is collecting digital royalties in extremely minimal amounts. WEA is still collecting more significant revenues. LMMG is not an operational business at all. Small efforts are made to assist labels, but that is about it. I am ninety-nine percent positive LMMG will enter bankruptcy before the end of 2009.”

Our saga ends in a gigantic building in New York City, specifically 1290 Avenue of the Americas. The ground floor houses *Rolling Stone* magazine. Warner Brothers occupies the entire 23rd floor, housing many of its subsidiary labels: Nonesuch, Ryko, Atlantic, Reprise, East West, Asylum. It is also the place where Dirk Hemsath currently goes to work on Doghouse Records.

In closing, *Razorcake* has definite bias concerning LMMG. It’s based on the fact that we have structured our business from our ideals. Being DIY punks is definitely not the “most successful” way to do business. It’s definitely not the most lucrative. But, without our integrity, we’re nothing. Well, we’re not nothing, but we’re considerably less. We’d be like every other faceless company out there, figuring out how to sell as much as possible of what we have the most in stock. I still like to believe that the best of the underground is people first and foremost. Handshakes.

Good-to-your-word. If something goes kablooey on either side of the court, then there is a personal assurance that it will be taken care of honestly, forthrightly.

We also live in a country where companies have many of the same rights as people. If LMMG chooses to declare bankruptcy, all of the labels currently owed money, even if they sue and win their case, have no guarantee they’ll see a dime. Realistically, if payments are made, those who have signed personal guarantees with LMMG and Dirk Hemsath (such as the bank), will be the first in the queue paid. If litigation does get pushed, the courts will decide if LMMG has broken any laws. Laws are in place to limit the amount of damage that can personally befall those who own the company.

Those laws don’t change the fact that LMMG still hasn’t paid off its debts to those who provided the company with its “fuel,” its “content.” Those hundreds of labels, thousands of bands, tens of thousands of songs were the company. It’s hard for me to just swallow that type of collateral damage as “business as usual.” The odds are stacked heavily against those labels getting paid what LMMG owes them.

So, I say take caution and pause any time you’re asked to sign a contract that doesn’t give you workable rights with the company you’re signing with. (Nowhere in any contract I’ve ever read between a publisher and a distributor are there severely punitive measures against the distributor if they’re late with a payment or a statement or go out of business, but there are paragraphs and paragraphs about timetables and conditions the publisher must follow in order to avoid penalty.) Ask direct questions when you don’t understand a word or a concept on those sheets of paper. That wording isn’t there to protect you.

Perhaps *Razorcake*’s ideals are naïve. I’ll accept that. But, as an independent publisher of fifteen years, there have been recurring themes, as old as yellowed newsprint. One of them is that any time a major corporation dips its ladle deep into the underground, we have so much more to lose than they will ever gain; it’s our blood and sweat that gets spilled versus some ticks on a balance sheet for them. It’s hard not feeling harvested, picked apart.

When someone flies the “independent” flag, I always expect more from them: true, untethered independence from big businesses that usually bite the underground sooner or later, is what makes this whole DIY gig different. It’s all about a person doing what they said they were going to do and them being personally responsible for their promises. Paperwork and litigation be damned.

Keep making and celebrating great music—just be careful in the process.



TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE STAFF

Adrian Salas

5 Old Bands I Hope to Finally See Live in 2010, after Always Missing Them

5. Green Day—I've seen Pinhead Gunpowder and the Network, but never the Billy Joe band millions of other people have seen.
4. Stan Ridgway/Wall Of Voodoo—Solo or with some version of WOV would be good. The guy's voice and lyrics are brilliant.
3. GWAR—Every year they play. Every year I say I'm going. Every year has me regretting not showing up in clothes I plan on never wearing again.
2. Cheap Trick—if they open for a shit band like Foreigner at some amphitheatre the show's semi-affordable, but if they headline a small place the price is really high. Weird how one pays for the privilege of not having to listen to AOR crap.
1. Descendents—Okay, I don't know if they're active, but they never technically broke up, right? And they still owe the world a tour for their *Cool to Be You* album. If you're reading this Descendents, this is your year to tour! Even if just a two-show run in So-Cal...

Art Ettinger

- Fleshies, *Brown Flag* LP
- Shutouts, *Saturday Night at the Bunk House* CD
- Homostupids, *The Load* LP
- Jeff Clayton and the Mongrels, Self-titled 7"
- You Weren't There: A History of Chicago Punk 1977-1984* DVD

Ben Snakepit

- Stymie, *AOTU* 7" single
- Homewreckers. demo CD
- Serious Tracers, demo CD
- Fleshies, *Brown Flag* LP/CD
- Seventeen Again, LP

Chris Pepus

- Top Five Current Reasons Why It Pays to Go See Documentaries*
- *Capitalism: A Love Story*
 - *October Country*—One year in

All donuts are punk besides Dunkin.

the life of a working-class family in New York state

- *Chelsea on the Rocks*—Abel Ferrara's look at the Chelsea Hotel
- *Severe Clear*—Iraq in 2003, shot by a Marine and edited by a filmmaker
- Director Kristian Fraga's presentation about *Severe Clear* at the St. Louis International Film Festival

Craig Horky

- Top 5 Christmas Movies*
1. *Die Hard*
 2. *Gremlins*
 3. *A Christmas Story*
 4. *Die Hard 2*
 5. *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*

Craven Rock

5. Captain Black
The BigGulp! CD-R
4. *The 42nd Parallel* by John Dos Passos (book)
3. *Give Me a Dollar* (zine)
2. The Old, Weird America at The Frye (art exhibit)
1. "My Fate" by Charles Bukowski (poem)

CT Terry

1. Old Growth / 12XU, split 7"
2. Tegan and Sara, *Sainthood* LP
3. Scarface, *The Fix* LP
4. *Terribly Happy* (Frygtelig Lykkelig) (movie)
5. columbiachronicle.com/god-was-magic/

Designated Dale's

- Top 5 Cheeses for Your Tacos...*
1. Queso fresco, sprinkled on top.
 2. Panela, sprinkled on top.
 3. Anejo, sprinkled on top.
 4. Queso Oaxaca (Quesillo), melted down with the meat before slapped onto the tortilla.
 5. Asadero (Queso Quesadilla), also melted down with the meat before being slapped onto the tortilla.

Danny Martin

- Top 5 '80s Wrasslers*
1. "Rowdy" Roddy Piper
 2. Andre the Giant
 3. Ted Dibiase (the "Million Dollar Man")
 4. Jimmy "Superfly" Snuka
 5. Hulk Hogan

Danny Spit

- Shang-A-Lang / God Equals Genocide, split 7"
- Bastidas, demo
- In Control, *Another Year*
- Herbie Hancock, *Headhunters*
- Virgin Megawhore, *Doorknob of San Diego*

Daryl Gussin

- Rough Kids 7"
- Hidden Spots, *Hundred Million Voices* LP
- Everything Falls Apart, *Relief* LP
- Fat Beavers, *There's No End to That Shit* CD
- Trainwreck #07 tie with *Cometbus* #53

Dave Brainwreck

- Capitalism sucks. Compromise here:*
1. Punk bookstores: Left Bank Books, Book Thug Nation (Seattle, Brooklyn)
 2. Punk record stores: Singles Going Steady, Love Garden (Seattle, Lawrence)
 3. Punk eats: Wayward Cafe, Black Bear Bakery (Seattle, St. Louis)
 4. Punk coffee: Porchlight Coffee, Hard Times Cafe (Seattle, Minneapolis)
 5. Punk donuts: Daily Dozen (Seattle, but all donuts are punk besides Dunkin)

Dave Williams

- Top 5 Moments from Last Night's Municipal Waste show*
1. Meeting Danny Lilker! (I'm twenty-eight years old and still star struck by decidedly unfamous people... embarrassing)
 2. Hanging with Tony (Always a treat).
 3. Insane all-girl mosh pit during Cauldron's set. Awesome.
 4. Boogie-board stagedives still looking awesome even after the 1,000th time.
 5. Parisian bouncer with *Mentally Vexed* tattoo across the back of his neck. Crown of Thornz 4 life.

Mademoiselle Ever a.k.a "the girl about town"

1. The Spits at Five Star Bar
2. Christ On Parade at Infest Warehouse
3. RIP / Eskorbuto, split repress on Munsterama
4. Mutoid Men, *Mutoid World* LP
5. *A Serious Man* (movie)

Jake Shut

Top 5 Shows in Late 2009

1. Jesus Lizard, Toys That Kill, and Riverboat Gamblers (Go Ian!) at Fun Fun Fun Fest
2. Dwarves at The Triple Rock
3. Motörhead at First Avenue
4. Toxic Holocaust and Skeleton Witch at The Annex
5. Baroness at The Triple Rock

Jeff Proctor

Top 5 Hot Dog Brands

1. Nathan's
2. Applegate Farms
3. Hebrew National
4. Vienna Beef
5. Sabrett

Jennifer Federico

Top 5 Bands to Listen to When You Don't Feel Like Listening to a Damn Thing

1. The Briefs
2. Black Elk
3. The Ramones
4. Circle Jerks
5. Black Flag

Jimmy Alvarado

Five Black Sabbath Songs You Rarely Hear on the Radio

- "Planet Caravan," *Paranoid* LP
- "Into the Void," *Master of Reality* LP
- "Under the Sun," *Vol. 4* LP
- "A National Acrobat," *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* LP
- "Hole in the Sky," *Sabotage* LP

Joe Dana

Top 5 Bands of the Year (As in I Listened to Their New Records a Lot)

1. Dear Landlord
2. Cheap Girls
3. Dillinger 4
4. Shang-A-Lang
5. Sass Dragons

Josh Benke

1. King Khan and BBQ Show, live and *Invisible Girl* LP
2. Mickey, live
3. Shannon And The Clams, live
4. The Yolks, live
5. Sonic Chicken Four, live

Juan Espinosa

Top 5 Black Flag Rollins-Era Songs

1. "Nothing Left Inside"
2. "Black Coffee"
3. "Bastard in Love"
4. "Damaged 2"
5. "My War"

Keith Rosson

- *The Butt* by Will Self (novel)
- Ghostlimb / Fischer split 10"
- The Have-Nots, *Serf City USA* CD

- *Where the Money Went*
by Kevin Canty (stories)
- White type on black

Kiyoshi Nakazawa

Comics and books I have been reading

1. *Dear Andy Kaufman I Hate Your Guts!*—Lynn Margulies. Mostly just looking at all the pictures of girls from the '70s.
2. *Archie Americana Series: Best of the Fifties*—Written and drawn by uncredited ghost creators. I always hated Archie comics growing up, but now I secretly like the vintage ones. Don't tell anybody.
3. *The Boy Detective Fails*—Joe Meno. Large type and short chapters makes finishing a book possible for me.
4. *The Baby Sitter*—Andy Ristaino. Extra large format graphic novel with mind-bending detailed art.
5. *X-Statix* (the complete run)—Peter Milligan and Michael Allred. A superhero comic for people who hate super hero comics.

Kurt Morris

Top Five Albums of the Year

1. Slayer, *World Painted Blood*
2. Converge, *Axe to Fall*
3. Propagandhi, *Supporting Caste*
4. Pelican, *What We All Come to Need*
5. Isis, *Waivering Radiant*

Lauren Measure

Top 5 Records of 2009

- Reigning Sound, *Love and Curses*
- Cheap Girls, *My Roaring 20's*
- Masshysteri, *Vår Del Av Stan*
- Neko Case, *Middle Cyclone*
- P.S. Eliot, *Introverted Romance in Our Troubled Minds*

Maddy Tight Pants

1. Magic Kids, *Hey Boy 7"*
2. Dear Landlord, *Dream Homes* LP
3. Popettes, *Love Visions* LP
4. Okmoniks, *Party Fever!!!* LP
5. Remember Shirley (Shirley Temple double LP!)

Matt Average

- Kiss, live at Staples Center
 - Struck By Lightening, *Serpents* CD
 - Gestapo Khazi, Self-titled 12" EP
 - Wizzard Sleeve,
- Make the World Go Away* LP
- Abortii 13, *Viimeinen Veriloy* EP

Marcus Solomon

1. True Friends
(they will save your life.)
2. Buddhist monk power
(they will save your life, too.)
3. Teaching and learning
(it makes life worth living.)
4. The Dickies (This is the soundtrack to my life.)
5. The Melvins (This is also the soundtrack to my life.)

- ### Mike Frame
1. *Psyched To Die, Year One* CD
 2. Drivin N Cryin, *Bubble Factory* CD
 3. Shadows Fall, *Retribution* CD
 4. Tegan And Sara, *Sainthood* CD
 5. Rose Melberg, *Homemade Ship* CD

Miss Namella Kim

- 5 Things to Share with You
1. Gestapo Khazi—I managed them for a few weeks. Best of luck to them. They complained about not getting any press. Here ya go, boys. They put on such great live shows. I know you will love them. Split single with Ebonics (another great band!) available now. Find them on MySpace or Facebook.
2. Night Of Pan—art film with witchcraft. Vincent Gallo dressed as a demented satyr (not really a stretch, eh?) and really good noise music soundtrack.
3. The Chameleons at Part Time Punks—this was in late summer but I gotta give it props. Man, it was really hot in the club. Andrew Aestheik is such a goth god, and to think he was just a MySpace personality a few years back. See, kids, practice playing your guitar and pump yourself up on social networks: magic formula for success!

4. Little Red Radio—Lara and her crew of extra-hot, model-worthy boys pound out some brazen and catchy electro punk dance for you to get your ass on the floor. Man, that drummer is fucken good!
5. *Pure* by David Aaron Clark. This is a porn film based on the movie *Realm of the Senses*. It is probably in a league of its own when it comes to adult films. Unfortunately, the director passed away over Thanksgiving. He was a friend, mentor and genuinely sweet guy. I will miss him a lot.

Mor Fleisher-Leach

1. Black Time's last tour ever!
2. Roman Polanski
3. *Rock n' Roll High School* on VHS
4. Books that are too sad to get through (currently: Stefan Zweig's *The Post-Office Girl*).
5. Jean Boulet's obsession with Bela Lugosi

MP Johnson

- Funfunfun fest in Austin, TX (Danzig!)
- Misfits, *Land of the Dead* 12"
- Shakira, *She Wolf* CD
- Soul Asylum Live at First Ave
- Bobcat Goldthwait, live

Naked Rob KSCU 103.3FM

1. The Sons Of Hercules, *A Different Kind Of Ugly* CD (Texas garage rock)
2. Snowbyrd, *Diosdado* CD (Texas rock)

3. Hickoids, *The Hairy Chafin'* EP (Texas cowpunk)
4. Fancy Fenetix, *No Need for Therapy* CD (Austrian punk rock)
5. Stout City Rockers, Self-Titled CD (San Jose Punk grupo)

Nighthawk

Bands I Had Never Seen Before Until Fest 8

- Virgins
- Cheeky
- Ghost Knife
- Stoned At Heart
- Hair Beard Combo

Rene Navarro

1. Tijuana, Baja California Norte
2. X, *Under the Big Black Sun* LP
3. *Cortes Crudos Skate Zine*, October Issue
4. New Order, *Movement* LP
5. Maladie, Self-titled LP

Replay Dave

Top 5 Items Currently Checked out from Alachua County Library

- Alan Moore, *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*
- Black Sabbath, *The Dio Years*
- Osamu Tezuka, *MW*
- Stan Lee, *Fantastic Four* collection
- David Byrne, *Grown Backwards*

Rev. Norb

- Hunx & His Punx, *Gay Singles* LP
- Mojomatics, *Another Cheat on Me* 45
- Hex Dispensers, *Winchester Mystery House* LP
- Sweet Sixteens, *Sweatin' to the Oldies* Cassette
- Holly & The Non-Italians, Self-titled CD

Rhythm Chicken

- Television, *Marquee Moon*
- The Clash, *The Clash*
- Big Star, *Big Star*
- Tom Robbins, *Still Life with Woodpecker* (book)
- The entire Enon discography

Ryan Horky

1. Superchunk, *Crossed Wires* 7"
2. The Measure {SA} / The Ergs! 7"
3. Huey Lewis And The News, *Sports* LP
4. Brutal Truth, *Machine Parts +4* 7"
5. Dear Landlord, *Dream Homes* CD

Ryan Leach

- Wall Of Voodoo
- Marc Moreland
- The Clean
- Ramones
- May 1968

Samantha Beerhouse

Top 5 Records to Cook to

1. White Wires, Self-titled LP
2. Roger Allen Wade, *All Likkered Up* CD
3. Black Joe Lewis & The Honey Bears, *Tell 'Em What Your Name Is!* CD

4. The Devil Makes Three, Self-titled CD
5. Lovage, *Music to Make Love to Your Old Lady* By CD

Sean Koepenick

Bands I Am Enjoying Reading about in Bomp! 2: Born in the Garage

- The Seeds (RIP Sky Saxon!)
- The Standells
- The Leaves
- Pretty Things
- The Troggs

Shahab Zargari

Top 5 Viewed Music Videos on Our Youtube Uploads

1. Intro5pect "No More Time"
2. Underground Railroad to Candyland "Yuppie Hip Hop Ad"
3. The Unlovable "Feelin' all Emo"
4. Off With Their Heads "Idiot"
5. HOTS "Modern"

Steve Hart

Top Five Songs by David Bowie That Most People Hate, But That I Like

1. "Amazing," Tin Machine
2. "Absolute Beginners"
3. "As the World Falls Down" (From the *Labyrinth* soundtrack)
4. "Loving the Alien"
5. "Time Will Crawl"

Steve Larder

Top Five Records That Make Me Wanna Smash Things

- Wolfbeast Destroyer, Self-titled demo
- Disfear, *Soul Scars* LP
- Gasmask Terror, Self-titled LP
- Skitkids / Exhale, split 7"
- The Horror, *Spoils of War* LP

Todd Taylor

Top Five Spots, *Hundred Million Voices* LP

- Shang-A-Lang, *Sad Magic* LP
- Marked Men / This Is My Fist, split 7"
- RVIVR, *Derailer* 7"
- Daylight Robbery, *Red Tape* EP 7"

Ty Stranglehold

Top 5 "L" Bands

- Leatherface
- Los Olividores
- Lower Island Dealers
- Lunachicks
- Leaving Trains

Vincent Battilana

• Fleabag, tape and live

- Dirty Marquee, demo CD-R and live
- Hidden Spots, *Hundred Million Voices* LP
- RVIVR, Fleabag, and Dirty Marquee at Julia's House in Oakland on Nov. 20th
- Three-way tie: Snuggle, *Zero Real Hearts* LP; Cheeky, *What the Heck?* 12" EP; Mutoid Men, *Mutoid World* 12" EP



ABORTTI 13: *Viimeinen Veriloyly*: EP

This record is unbelievably great! Abortti 13 has done something far too many old bands can not pull off to save their lives. These songs were written back in 1983 and recorded in 2009, and sound like they were recorded in 1983. Huh?! How did they do it? And they did it in one take. This is pure Scandinavian hardcore punk rock! Which translates to, "This is a record you must get!" Raw, speedy, catchy, and they have soul. The sort of record you hear and it makes you feel alive. Not one bad song in the fourteen on here. If you like bands like Riistetyl, Terveet Kadet, and Kaaos, then you need to get this, and also seek out their split EP with Pyhakoulu. —M.Avg (Killer, kilrec@luukku.com)

ACES & EIGHTS: *A Different Animal...*: CD

Hailing from Boise, Aces & Eights continue pumping out their fast, hard brand of punk. I recall them having more of an oi/streetpunk feel on earlier releases, whereas now they're definitely incorporating some cock rock influences into their material. I wish they'd leave the lead guitar lines at the door because, otherwise, there's a lot to dig on. The vocals have a kind of metal feel, but not overly so. I don't know that *A Different Animal...* is the best place for newcomers to start, but Aces & Eights' existing fans will be into it for sure. There's a very aggressive "in the bar" shade to the recording that allows it to feel loud even when played at low volume. You can practically smell spilt PBR upon popping this CD in. —Art Ettinger (Downtown Academy)

AFTERNOON NAPS: *Parade*: CD

Afternoon Naps like Orange Juice and The Three O'Clock a whole hell of a lot more than me. I hate Edwyn Collins' music quite a bit. Absolute pap. The moments on *Parade* that resemble the better parts of C86 (i.e. The Wedding Present) and the Paisley Underground (i.e. the sublime Rain Parade) are not quite evident enough to save this CD from white funk riff-raff. (On the subject of C86, be sure to check out the Shop Assistants' *Will Anything Happen*. Top-notch stuff that's definitely underappreciated.) —Ryan Leach (Happy Happy Birthday To Me)

AIRES AND GRACES:

What Happened to the Kids? 7"

This band from Washington State takes its name from a phrase that means putting on airs. Thanks to some remarkable bass lines, it's a bit more soulful than some of the other oi acts on Longshot and the vocals sound a little Leatherface-ish. "Doesn't want to learn

RECORD REVIEWS



"Just get to the songs; I got stuff to do.
If I wanna see Network, I'll rent it."

—Billups Allen

DEAD CAT LOUNGE: *Don't Come Back*: CD

from an older face, because he's learned everything to know from MySpace" is one of the more unintentionally funny lines I've come across in awhile. There's something hilarious about punk rockers complaining about kids using technology. Do Aires and Graces have a MySpace site? You bet your braces they do. —Jim Ruland (Longshot Music)

ANDREW JACKSON JIHAD: *Can't Maintain*: CD

This recording shows Andrew Jackson Jihad playing a bunch of songs you've already heard if you're a fan, but with a bunch of backing musicians. If you already love this band, you're sure to love this as well. If you've been passing on it due to their strictly acoustic sound, this might be the album that wins you over with everything from blazing guitar to trombone and theremin. —Rene Navarro (Asian Man)

ANEURYSM RATS: *Dying to Live*: 12" EP

Powerful and heavy hardcore that sounds like a mix of Deadguy and Gordon Solie Motherfuckers. Aneurysm Rats features members from Paint It Black, None More Black, and others. They expand on their musical past with more potency and darkness. The songs are a mix of speed and mid tempos that somehow create a chaotic din when they throw it into fourth gear. The vocalist sounds

a bit like Tony Erba as well. I like how they sequenced the songs on this album to run into one another, which allows them to create a mood throughout: one of disenchantment, confusion, and other feelings of abnormality in a fucked-up and diseased world. —M.Avg (Assassinated, assassinatedrecords.com)

ASPIRIN:

We Do Painkilling to Your Anger: 7"

Holy smokes! Where does Schizophrenic find these obscure Japanese bands? (Not that I'm an expert on the Japanese scene.) A no-holds-barred band that goes straight for the attack. They waste no time going for speed and anger while taking short breathers to show they can rock at points. Manic thrash is the focus and I can't believe the Japanese language can be screamed at this pace. Add that to the gang-style choruses, driving guitar and bass, all carried by the breakneck drum barrage. If this band stays together, continues to put out releases, and doesn't achieve the popularity like Paintbox or Judgment, I will put my punk hat in the closet. This is band is that good. —Donofthedead (Schizophrenic)

BAD BLOOD REVIVAL: *Tongue Twisting Tunes for Tiny Tots*: LP

This initially reminded me of Stupid Party, with their stoner and grungy inclinations, yet pretty different because

of their seeming penchant for some of the noisier, more abrasive Touch & Go catalog titles (e.g., Jesus Lizard). Then I found out that they toured with Stupid Party recently. It made sense, for sure. Another thing that I think I read (maybe in an interview that Daryl sent me with somebody, maybe somewhere else) BBR was formerly just Bad Blood. I believe that they augmented their name after a line-up change; so if you've been keeping an eye out for the Bad Blood full-length, I do believe that this is what you are looking for. And I don't blame you for keeping an eye out, as it is pretty heavy and intense. Dead Broke has done some decent stuff, but this is one of the more interesting releases I have seen from them, without a doubt. I'm liking it quite a bit. —Vincent (Dead Broke)

BAD SPORTS: *Self-titled*: LP

Bad Sports sound as if they've been having late night, after work meetings discussing the finer points of the Nerves and the Urinals over half a carton of smokes and a case of insert the name of your favorite cheap domestic beer here. Early Ramones also isn't merely a reference here. It's a way of life. And the Sports clearly adhere to that motto. This record gets better with every listen. —Juan Espinosa (Douche Master)

BALANCE AND COMPOSITION: *Only Boundaries*: 12" EP

Four songs of beefy emo rock, like prime Cursive, or the stuff that Revelation was releasing fifteen years ago. The musicianship is tight and the recording packs a punch and a crunch. The problem is, that while the music takes its cues from the highpoints of this much-maligned genre, the vocals are lifted wholesale from the radio emo of the last five years. The lead singer is whiney, and some dipstick screams in the background every now and then. Making matters worse, the vocals are super loud in the mix. It's a shame, because the music shows a lot of promise; it's just sunk by what Mr. Burns on The Simpsons would describe as "off-key caterwauling." —CT Terry (No Sleep, nosleeprecs.com)

BANNER PILOT: *Collapser*: CD

This is album is in my top three of the year, for sure. Hell, it might be number one. I have the *Pass the Poison* EP, but somehow managed to miss *Resignation Day*. *Collapser* manages to feel comfortably familiar, yet still exciting and fresh. For the uninitiated, Banner Pilot is really gritty pop punk (think gravel vocals, heavy and really busy bass work that's actually noticeable, tempos that never really dip below fast, and twin guitars that know how

RAZORCAKE RECORD REVIEW GUIDELINES AND FAQ'S

• The address to send all review material is Razorcake, PO Box 42129, LA, CA 90042. You may address it to specific reviewers. Just make sure they're active.

• Full album art is required for a review. Pre-releases go into the trash. Don't treat us like second-rate citizens. We're all volunteers here.

• Are you really sending us a download card to review? Seriously? That's weak. Many of our contributors don't have fancy computers. Nope, we won't review 'em.

• You're sending us a CD-R of a piece of vinyl you're releasing to cut on costs? Please don't pull that stunt with us. We know mail's expensive, but we send full copies of the zine as a thanks to all who send us material to review (if your address is provided).

• It is very important to put a postal address on each and every piece of music sent in. Many packages get separated and given to different reviewers.

• Over eight years of music reviews can be found at www.razorcake.org. Use our handy "search" function on the site to see if your music has been reviewed. Tight.

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Be My Doppelganger
MY DOPPELGANGER

THE DOPAMINES

MARCH 19 - Cincinnati, OH
MARCH 20 - Chicago, IL***
MARCH 21 - Elgin, IL
MARCH 22 - Milwaukee, WI
MARCH 23 - Sheboygan, WI
MARCH 24 - Duluth, MN
MARCH 25 - Minneapolis, MN
MARCH 26 - Madison, WI
MARCH 27 - Indianapolis, IN
MARCH 28 - Columbus, OH
MARCH 29 - Pittsburgh, PA
MARCH 30 - Philadelphia, PA
MARCH 31 - New Brunswick, NJ
APRIL 1 - New York, NY
APRIL 2 - Baltimore, MD
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to play some excellent minor key stuff against power chords), with a low-key epic quality to it. It's like every song is somehow the story of your life while it's playing. *Collapser* sounds like the album I always hoped None More Black would make. The lyrics are really great too. They have a bit of the Weakerthams' Great Plains desperation poetry mixed with Lifetime's direct emotiveness. I would single out some tracks, but they're all great. Get this, and if you don't like it... well, much like the Grinch, your heart may be two sizes too small. —Adrian (Fat)

BLACK 100S, THE: *Out with the Stars*: CD

Singer/songwriter, Thomas Handschiegel, is armed with an acoustic guitar and the blues. He strums somber songs from a stark landscape. His vocals don't have much range, like the monotone purr of Leonard Cohen or the dreamy sighing of Nick Drake. Unlike them, Thomas's voice lacks richness and, at times, sounds deliberately restrained, while, mechanically, his melodies are hit and miss. The ending of "The Lost Song" is restless and tight like his earlier work on "Cocksucker Blues," but Thomas stopped there. On the other tracks, it sounds like he's strumming more out of habit than passion. —Kristen K (Self-released)

BLACK FORK: *The First Fork Years*: LP

No idea how I missed these guys when they were around and I was living up there. There, being the Bay Area.

Friends and acquaintances would talk Black Fork up, and make it sound like some huge event. They'd often ask me about why I wasn't at the show, and I didn't even know about the show until well after the fact. What's a person to do? Well, it's been a good, long time since those days. Longer than I sometimes realize. But life and time have that way of moving fast, and when you get hep to that, it goes even faster. S'anyways, Mess Me Up has taken it upon themselves to release all of Black Fork's EPs, demo, comp, and split material onto one twelve inch piece of blue vinyl. A good twenty-three songs that embody the East Bay punk sound. Sort of sounds like the spawn from the union of Blatz and Filth on that split they did nearly twenty years ago on Lookout. Snotty, ugly, belligerent, discordant, and somehow catchy. One listen of the rager, "Don't Talk to Me" will have you hooked. It has all the elements of a classic punk song. Catchier than the swine flu, and lots of pure 'tude. —M.Avg (Mess Me Up)

BLACK KNOTS: *Guitarmageddon*: CD

Loud rock'n'roll stuff along the same lines that bands like Zeke have trod prior. They pump in enough energy to deliver one overcharged, hell raising salvo of guitar-driven noise and manage to make it sound fresh. Only gripe is "A Change Is Gonna Come" ain't a Sam Cooke cover, which would've been truly impressive if they'd manage to pull that kind of an endeavor off. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Beat)

BLOCKED OUT: *Torn Throats*: 7"

Shit yes. The list of bands Blocked Out is compared to did not prepare me for this record. When you're expecting "Judge meets American Nightmare" and you get "Ringworm meets Ruination" you're bound to be a little shaken up. Shaken up in a very good way, in my case. This rips *hard*. Just vicious, not unlike the recent *Blind To Faith* record, although without the "evil" imagery. An incredibly pleasant surprise. —Dave Williams (Television)

BLOWTOPS, THE: *64 Teeth*: 7"

It took a few listens, but the Blowtops' experimental keyboard weirdness and mentally ill sounding vocals grew on me in much the same way Lili Z's last LP did. "64 Teeth" is a warped stream of consciousness rant that falls completely apart about half way through, the drums galloping into a mess of percussive confusion only to be brought back into some sort of song structure by an eerily held keyboard note. The flip side is more precise musically, but doesn't shake off one bit of the lunatic vibe from side one. —Josh Benke (Certified PR, myspace.com/certifiedpr)

BOLTH: *If You Want Peace, Prepare for Class War*: CD

The title to this record made me think that it was gonna be run-of-the-mill anarcho punk tinged with metal. I guess I wasn't far off, but this record really isn't run-of-the-mill. Ya, the first seven tracks or so are fairly standard musical fare of this genre, but the last three or four set

me on my ear; they had a bit more of a hardcore sound, were a bit more catchy, and didn't have that feeling of trying to walk with eighty-pound weights tied around one's neck. This is not to slight the first two-thirds of the record, but the last third was so rollicking and free compared to the rest; those songs dominate my attention. Good record overall. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Useless World, uselessworldrecords.com)

BOO FROG: *Self-titled*: CD

Sounds like this emerged from the swamps of Baton Rouge, but this trio actually hails from Portland. Sparse, raw sound from this three-piece, since there is no bassist. But there's still a decent depth here. I wouldn't say The Cramps are my favorite band, but I bet these guys might. "Birthday Girl" actually reminds me of a Kinks song, so we are treading similar moving sidewalks at times. "Throw Me a Bone" sounds like a Velvet Underground outtake that John Cale forgot to bring his viola into the session. Intriguing material that I can see myself popping in again when the mood strikes me as I'm driving home late at night. —Sean Koepnick (Skullman)

BORED GAMES: *Party Til You Puke*: 10"

Power pop by way of smooth garage/girl groups, with a noticeable rock'n'roll influence—not in the Chuck Berry vein, so much as the kinds of bands like the Reigning Sound or Used Kids, and while, admittedly, I don't know that kind of stuff that well

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compared to a lot of my friends, I do like this. I recognize Addie from Lefty Loosie (who did a good job singing before, but really sounds *fantastic* here), but not the other dude singing, who provides a good contrast, keeping things interesting. This is terrific! —Joe Evans III (Repulsion)

BORED STRAIGHT / NORDIC WASTE / HOLY SHIT!: Split 7"

Wisconsin seems to have an unusually good instinct to stacking bands up on top of each other. This 7" is the equivalent of a River West basement show, except there are only three bands and I have yet to bang my head on the house's plumbing system. Musically, the trio at hand offers varying speeds and ideologies of harsh, wintered hardcore punk that range in the humor/seriousness department. While not cooking up something for "everyone," it definitely packs a punch for those who are lookin' for it. —Daryl (Holy Shit!)

BREAKAWAYS, THE: Walking Out on Love (The Lost Sessions); CD

Between the breakup of L.A. power pop legends The Nerves and the formation of their equally legendary bands The Beat (not to be confused with the English Beat) and the Plimsouls, Paul Collins and Peter Case had a band called the Breakaways. Although the group never really quite got off the ground, they did manage to record a few demos of some tunes from the Nerves' set list and, in the case of the title track, some that would also feature in the Beat's future set list. These tapes were apparently mislaid for many a moon,

but have been rediscovered and released. The sound quality is great considering these are demos and they're some thirty-odd years old, and the songs, well, we are talking about the dudes responsible for "Rock 'n' Roll Girl" and "A Million Miles Away," so of course the tunes are top notch. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alive, alivenenergy.com)

BRIMSTONE HOWL:

Big Deal. What's He Done Lately?: CD

Excellent third album from these wunderkind fuzz monsters. They give the blown-out, fuzz box treatment to a few different musical styles, including country and western on "Easter at the Lewises" and '60s British Invasion on "Suicide Blues" and "Elation," all to fine effect. There's a longing that echoes in the singer's cracking voice on "Final Dispatch" that lends the song emotional depth. The guitar interplay with the lead vocals works especially well throughout the record. The album is so good I can even forgive them for rhyming "cool shit" with "atavistic" on "End of the Summer." —Josh Benke (Alive)

BROKEN NEEDLE: Self-titled: 7"

After a few delays, this finally sees the light of day. It's a great follow-up to their debut LP on Lengua Armada. Heard them remixed and remastered those tracks for their discography CD, which I heard has these tracks also. I actually like the original mix of the LP. Oh well, have to see if I like the new mix too. This 7" is five songs of intense hardcore in the mid to late '80s

vein that surely can peak the attention of the most jaded. A dual guitar attack punches though the mix to give it the power. Drums are banged with controlled madness and the bass gives it the punch needed to feel it in the ribs. Just the right backdrop for singer, Todd, to do his thing. Broken Needle on record is great, but seeing them live takes it up a few notches; at least what I have witnessed since they are a local band. "Energetic set" barely covers it. I usually get banged around good trying to take pictures either by the crowd or the band, but I know for sure that I'm going to enjoy every minute of it. —Donofthedead (Schizophrenic)

CARRIE NATIONS: Self-titled: 7" EP

My memory's shit. I just got my eighth concussion, followed two months later by a direct punch in the face that loosened some luggage upstairs. The upside to all this is that I'm virtually incapable of nostalgia because I have a hard time remembering in much of a linear fashion. I gotta really concentrate to separate what happened in 1998 from 2008. But, I did see Athens, Georgia's Carrie Nations at a house show in Anaheim (the cops came that day) years ago, and I was blown away. They've got a sorta indie rock approach to songwriting, meaning there's more attention to texture and dynamics, but it's played in such a manner that the drummer's glasses flew off his face from the combination of sweat and totally punishing the buckets. *Be Still*, their full length which I bought right after their

set along with their split with This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb, is a flawless record. Like roses cropping up from blood spilt in the cracks of a sidewalk, the a-side of this 7" are songs recorded in 2003 that had never before been released. That's the time capsule magic. The b-side is the remastered songs off the TBIAPB split that's long out of print. Love me some Carrie Nations. Relevant? More than ever. —Todd (Stankhouse, stankhouserrecords.com)

CAT PARTY: Self-titled: LP

The first thing that I heard from Cat Party was their "Jigsaw Thoughts" single, which is backed with "Entitled." The tunes on there were both pretty damn good post-punk, leaning more towards the minimalist, goth side of post-punk (Joy Division/early Bauhaus) as opposed to the noisy, chaotic side (Fall/DNA). Both of those songs made it on to this LP, which sees Cat Party fine tuning just a bit. I find it amazing how this three-piece is able to put together an LP of bleak yet rather hypnotic and atmospheric songs. Listening to this is, at times, like going into a commuter coma on a scenic drive: I plan on going out to take in the beauty, but it seems so obvious that I sink into it and just forget what I am doing; then I look up and notice that my surroundings are truly superlative. If you're going to brood, brood to this. —Vincent (Flat Black)

CHANNEL 3: To Whom It May Concern: 12"

Recorded in the spring of summer of 1981, the thirteen songs collected here

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represent CH3's demos. Anything but pristine, these rough-around-the-edges recordings are presented on beautiful, limited edition colored vinyl. You can hear strains of Agent Orange and the Cheifs circa *Hollywood Crisis*. Reading the liner notes, you get the sense that they're vaguely embarrassed by the rawness of the recordings, but, to my mind, some of these songs have never sounded better. —Jim Ruland (TKO)

CHEEKY: *What the Heck: 12"*

It's a shame that Cheeky are the latest in New York/Jersey area bands to call it quits, because they're pretty great, and this record is more proof. Take the snottiness of FYP, inject it into your little nieces and nephew, and have them practice along to All records. Crank one amp to a Gregg Ginn/Black Flag distortion level, the other an early Billy Joel/power pop jangle. Shouted-out lyrics about the problems that inevitably come up from being human. Supposedly, this record almost didn't come out, which would have been stupid, so make sure you get this and listen. —Joe Evans III (Freedom School)

CHOPPER: *Static (The Complete Recordings 1994-1998): 2 x CD*

Somehow, I completely missed out on Chopper, despite the fact that I got into punk in 1994, right when this band started. The first couple songs on the first CD are pretty good, but they're all about thirty-five seconds too long. (Yes, I timed it). If I had just one of these records, I'd probably like this band a little bit more,

but when you listen to all thirty-six songs in a row, they all start to sound the same, starting around song four. (And, in case you're wondering, there are many bands that I could listen to for thirty six plus songs, easy.) Basically, this is a British pop punk/sorta ten percent emo band that sounds exactly like Broccoli (the band, not the vegetable). The first CD has all their 7's, and the second CD includes the "Last Call for the Dancers" LP and "session tracks" recorded in 1996, which I'm guessing is leftover stuff from other recording sessions. Do I know what "session tracks" are? Not really. If this were a cereal, it'd be Cinnamon Chex. I recently had a handful, and it was okay at first, but by the last few pieces, I was ready to move on. —Maddy (Crackle)

CHROME SPIDERS: *Black Butterfly: 7"*

AC/DC's Brian Johnson has nothing on Thomas Jackson Potter, Chrome Spiders' caterwauling lead singer and guitar player. The man's voice was made to sing this type of timeless classic rock—muscular without being gruff, able to hit the upper register without being shrill, and a delivery as venomous as a striking sidewinder. The rhythm section does a fantastic job on "Black Butterfly" of locking things down without a bunch of needless noodling around. Even the guitar solo three-quarters of the way through the tune is restrained, complementing the tension that develops between the vocals and beat. The b-side is a scumbag dirge that conjures the Oblivians' "The Leather." Totally awesome. —Josh Benke (Big Neck)

CONVERGE: *Axe to Fall: CD/LP*

I've heard a number of people say that each Converge album is better than the last and after being around for almost twenty years and releasing eight albums (including *Axe to Fall*), that's saying a lot. It can't be denied that almost every Converge release has been good—great in fact. *Axe to Fall* definitely carries on that tradition, but I don't know if I can say it's better than their last release, *No Heroes*. I'm not really interested in comparing this album against previous ones so much except to say that none of the first eleven tracks really came out and grabbed me like some songs on previous albums ("Fault and Fracture," "No Heroes," and "Hope Street"). What really got my attention were the last two songs: "Cruel Bloom" and "Wretched World." I know there are a number of guest artists on *Axe to Fall*, but I didn't know one of them was Tom Waits. Actually, that's Steve Von Till from Neurosis, but he's definitely been practicing his Waits impression, as the vocals on "Cruel Bloom" sound like they could have come from the gritty troubadour. As Converge has progressed, they have always had a few slower songs on each album, but the ones on here are by far the best they've ever done. Another part of their development can be seen with the heavier, faster songs that comprise the bulk of the album. The musicianship is by far the best it's ever been, especially Kurt Ballou's guitar playing (although he does have help from members of Cave In and Disfear on some of the tracks). It's phenomenal. Bassist Nate Newton (also of Doomriders) is taking a bigger part in the vocals and it adds to the framework of the songs. Jake Bannon's vocals aren't constantly sounding like a dying bird and are showing more range on *Axe to Fall* than any album heretofore. My one complaint is that it seems that Newton's bass is buried in the mix and—when it is audible—it sounds like a rumbling freight train as opposed to anything clean that might add even more muscle to Converge's sound. While I can't say this is the best album in their catalog, it's still a fine piece of work and, on the whole, shows a great maturity on the part of the band without sacrificing any of their intensity. *Axe to Fall* is certainly worth the Converge fan's listen. —Kurt Morris (Epitaph)

COPYRIGHTS/BROKEDOWNS: *Split: 7"*

Copyrights: These-a-days, pop punk often starts off with three fingers down my throat. It takes quite a bit for my gag reflexes to not instantly kick in. I've got to hand it to Copyrights. They come swinging with two daggy melodies, ears-pinned-backed guitars, and closely-shorn songs. Nice. Makes me think of leather jackets, but not worn by the Fonz or meatbrains. **Brokedowns:** Although I was alive and occasionally being taken to the movies when *Flashdance* came out, I just recently saw it for the first time a couple months back. I imagine The Brokedowns, collectively, as the lead lady welder. Secretly, they aspired to be a ballet dancer who honed their

craft doing avant-art exotic dancing in an indifferent steel mill town. (The lead lady in *Flashdance* pulls this kabuki strobe light Dieter number at a strip club—with all her clothes on—and the rough-handed patrons go wild, enough so that Fear's Lee Ving tries to steal her away to his naughtier club. But she has higher, cultured aspirations.) This is a world I want to live in because it makes absolutely no sense on almost any level, but it's entertaining as shit. The Brokedowns are both strong and fair. Smart and funny. Red roses and reluctant nudity. They're not all about the arched-back bucket scene. Their welds hold true. Apply this to modern DIY Midwest punk music and any movie from the '80s (*Top Gun*, *Some Kind of Wonderful*, *Better Off Dead*) to arrive at your own conclusions. Or, fuck it if that's a little too straining: Karl Marx mixing it up with the Marx Brothers. —Todd (No Idea)

CRASH NORMAL: *Unrealistic Tracks*: EP

I wish I had seen these guys when they blew through town a while back. Seriously, one of the best bands going these days. At least that's my opinion. Their songs are massive in sound, they lurch, shake, crunch—not to mention they're noisy as hell—all delivered with unbelievable fuzzed-out style. A mix of garage, punk, blues, and whatever else they can fold into the din. Can't get enough of this stuff! If Crash Normal were a drug, I'd be fucked. —M.Avg (Compost Modern Art, myspace.com/compostmodernart)

CREepy CREEPs: *Fink About It*: CD

Have you ever seen a mummy dance? It's frightening at first. Dust is flying everywhere. Strange noises are coming out of the bandages as the dried meat and bones start to loosen up. Once you get used to what you're seeing, you're amazed at the energy. Next thing you know, you're stomping along with them, happy you didn't wait as long as they did. "What is this music?" you ask. It's the Creepy Creeps, of course. —MP Johnson (Dionysus)

DADFAG: *Scenic Abuse*: CD

The Good: I really wanna like this 'cause they're definitely of a "weird" bent, and there's an unsettling feeling to the music, which is never a band thing. The Bad: Little variation in sound and style from one tune to the next, so it ends up sounding like one long song. The Kinda Cool: The back cover picture of a dude smoking a cig with the track listing Sharpied onto his T-shirt. —Jimmy Alvarado (Broken Rekids)

DAYLIGHT ROBBERY: *Red Tape*: 7"EP

"Oh, you lazy fucker," part of my brain is saying. "You can't do better than that? Just because there are men and women vocals, and it's punk, you're going to bring up X? That's all you got for comparison? A band that hasn't written any new material since 1993?" But it's more than just the coed vocals. It's the mid-pacing of the songs, the reverb and slightly surf, slightly rootsy undertones, the fore fronting of the vocalists—like you'll be rewarded for understanding

what they're singing—and that each instrument has its own little ecosystem that's bigger when they're all blended together. Like the slower, more melodic Libyans tracks, especially "Welcome to the Neighborhood." So what if the fingerprints are from the Dangerhouse era? The music sounds crisp and fresh-from-the-plastic, newly peeled out of the sleeve. Highly recommended. —Todd (Residue, residue-records.com)

DEAD CAT LOUNGE: *Don't Come Back*: CD

Pretty standard political street punk/American oi hybrid. There is a song called "Barbara's Bush" about Barbara Bush's, ... well, ... bush. It comes across as bit immature, but not ostensibly offensive and definitely reminiscent of late-'80s crossover humor. The singer really sells the humor element of the band. The vocals come across loud and clear and he is able to express sarcasm without sounding too pleased with himself. He sounds pissed and confident. Overall, a pretty strong band. The songs are good, but the album suffers from the songs having too many intro riffs. There needs to be a little more 1234-go in the presentation. The album starts with a one and a half minute excerpt from *Network*. Just get to the songs; I got stuff to do. If I wanna see *Network*, I'll rent it. —Billups Allen (Fish, myspace.com/DeadCatLounge)

DEAD SCENE RADIO: Self-titled: CD-R

Rock band dreck. —Jimmy Alvarado (attractionrecords.com)

DEAD TO ME: *African Elephants*: CD

This album was a comedown after the *Little Brother* EP. After spending some time with it and seeing the new Jack Dalrymple-less three-piece lineup of Dead To Me live, I am warming up to this CD though. One of my initial criticisms is that it's just not possible to replace Jack in the vocals department. This isn't a slight against guitarist Nathan stepping up to the mic to throw in lead vocals alongside Chicken, so much as it is a tribute to the strength of Dalrymple's singing. He has one of those great punk voices, like Jeff Pezzati, that can make a song almost on its own. Secondly, the sequencing of the CD kinda throws the flow off right away because of the dubby, protest track "X" that starts it off. It's not a bad song by any means, but it's way different from anything that comes after, because of the slower reggae beat and organ going on, and is therefore an awkward start to the album. I would also say my final complaint is that there's a flatness to the production on a lot of the album that holds back some of the songs. I noticed this mostly when I saw that band play recently. Some of the songs that I didn't really pay attention to when I first heard them, really hit home on the stage, like "Cruel World," "Nothing Runnin' through My Brain," and "Fell Right In." (By the way, DTM is still amazing live, see them every chance you get.) After a few listens, a nice contrast becomes apparent between Nathan's more



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personal lyrical style and Chicken's political themes. That keeps a tension in the flow of the album that partially makes up for the sameness that happens in a couple of the stretches. So, in conclusion, this isn't as great as their near-perfect *Little Brother* EP, but this album is a grower, and is moving closer to *Cuban Ballerina* in my estimation. Not bad at all for the initial effort after a pretty radical regrouping. —Adrian (Fat)

DEMENTS, THEE: No Job, Blowjob: 7"

These two guys sure did tap into something with the name of this record. Some people just seem to think it's the funniest thing they've ever seen. Equals parts dementia and the realistic boundaries of "what is music," they concoct a rather hearty stew with the ingredients being: acoustic ukulele / guitar, theremin, vibraphone (whatever that is), and their own voices. It's a crunchy sound, made for people who like things a little on a strange and silly side. Contains ex-members of the Ultra Twist. —Daryl (Bubca)

DEZERTER: Ille Procent Duszy?: LP

Dezterer is a Polish punk rock band that has been around since 1981 and under the name Dezterer since 1983. The fact that they existed years before the fall of communism is notable. The fact that they had material released on Tonepress (the state-run record label) is even more impressive. Appearing on the legendary Polish punk rock sampler *Jak Punk to Punk*, Dezterer have gone

through different lineups and different general sounds over the years, but they always have had a serious sneer for the establishment. I think that carries a lot more weight in communist Poland than it does for bored American suburban kids. This red/black marble swirl vinyl was a total treat to find on my trailer's doorstep. Coming from Pasazer, it is not surprising that the production is topnotch. The sleeve, insert (in Polish and English), vinyl, and labels all look outstanding. The music reminds me of various late '80s hardcore outfits, sort of metal and not unlike Verbal Abuse. This is a gem amongst my vinyl collection. Dziekuje bardzo za doskanale pluty! —The Rhythm Chicken (Pasazer)

DIRTY LITTLE HEATERS, THE: Fatty Don't Feel Good: 7"

This is terrifically uninhibited garage rock with currents of blues and stoner metal bubbling beneath the surface. Vocalist/guitarist Reese McHenry carries some particularly punchy pipes (her impassioned shouts of "I believe in karma, too" light up "Untitled"), the instrumental work is taut, and the production is clean yet far from sterile. Per their MySpace, this North Carolina group only has shows in their home state listed. Why the hell aren't these guys taking their amped-up tantrums to the road? —Reyan Ali (Churchkey)

D.O.A.:

Kings of Punk, Hockey and Beer: CD

Dunno if this constitutes a new "album,"

per se, as it does another compilation of later tracks by this venerable punk act. What it looks like they've done is taken a number of tunes that have appeared on other releases over the years (could swear I've seen "Dead Men Tell No Tales" on at least two others) and repurposed them into a new collection addressing the three subjects identified in the album title. Some good songs can be found here—"Beat 'Em, Bust 'Em" comes pretty damned close to their "classic" period—while the rest are serviceable at worst, and they have the good sense to ditch the ska this time around. Is it a triumphant return to form for one of the greatest punk bands ever? Nope, but it ain't exactly terrible, either. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sudden Death)

DOWN WITH PEOPLE: Self-titled: 7"

Retro psychedelic guitar rock from this Seattle three piece, led by Ron Nine who fronted Love Battery. The first side is some gritty, heavy, yet tuneful rock with more than ample wah wah pedal use that manages to get its hooks into you a couple minutes in with its trance-inducing chorus and clever bridge. The other side is a fairly pedestrian cover of "Melancholia" by The Who that just made me wish they had put another original song on the B side. —Jake Shut (Flotation)

DOWNER PARTY, THE:

Ego-Driven Lust Creatures: CDEP

Sort of dreamy at bits, but definitely more garage pop from this female-led Bay Area three-piece. Songs that

have that shake-your-booty flair with a strong, rocking underbelly to carry it along. I really like the loud production on this recording: real bright but mixed evenly, while still having a hint of rawness. —Donofthedead (PopSmear)

DR. KNOW: Killing for God: LP

For better or worse, I've just thrown Dr. Know in there with a lot of the other Oxnard/Mystic bands of the '80s. My knowledge of their catalog is practically nil, apart from those random Mystic comp LPs I'd find in the used bins long ago and never seemed to hold onto for very long. They seemed synonymous with so much of the music from that era and—the stuff just hasn't aged that well. I mean, sure, I liked Ill Repute when I was sixteen, but their catalog (Uh, *Big Rusty Balls*, anyone?) has just not proven to be that sturdy over the years. So I was pretty surprised to hear that *Killing for God*, despite all expectations, is actually pretty good. Okay, if not *good*, it's at least passable. There's some reasonably cheesy chugga-chugga moments that veer pretty damn close to metal-esque territory, but it all sounds reasonably... accurate. Dedicated. Sincere. It's not as seamlessly awesome as the *Empty Grave* LP that came out a while back, but nowhere near as embarrassing as *Big Rusty Balls*, you know? Still sounds very "Nardcore" to this untrained ear, but it also comes across as the very definition—with all its limitations and trappings and corniness and, yes, strengths—of old-school hardcore. —Keith Rosson (Unrest)

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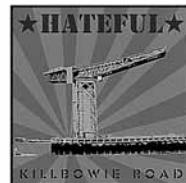


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EDDIE AND THE HOT RODS:***The Singles Collection: CD***

A collection of A-sides from this legendary pub rock band's initial '70s/'80s run here. As can be expected, the bulk of the hits—"Teenage Depression," "Get out of Denver," "Do Anything You Wanna Do," et al.—can be found here, along with liner notes for each single. Been many a moon since I last saw a Captain Oi release and I was kinda worrying they'd called it a day. Glad to see that fear was unwarranted. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

EDDY CURRENT SUPPRESSION RING:
Self-titled: CD

My esteemed colleague, *Suburban Voice*'s Al Quint, tells me this is a reissue of this band's first album, and I ain't gonna argue with him 'cause everyone knows Al knows his shit. He also sang this band's praises and, again, I'm inclined to agree. What this Aussie band does here is synthesize a number of influences in ways that recall past styles—a little Headcoats here, some classic '80s thud-punk there, maybe even a little Sniveling Shits as—while infusing it with a heap of much-needed ineptitude to keep things vibrant and relevant instead of slick and contrived. The often monosyllabic lyrics about love, poverty, and ice cream and the verve with which they play the tunes recall the best of punk's first few waves without sounding like a stale tribute band. —Jimmy Alvarado (Goner)

EQUALITIES, THE: *On the Street: 12"*

I either grow tired of things after awhile or I am just fickle. So I see that this release looks to be street punk. Ugh. But it's from Japan. Mmm... How bad can it be? Well it's pretty frickin' good. Melodic, tight, but the big factor is that it exudes a sense of fun. Fun in a pogo sense that you want to bounce around the room in a drunken stupor. But also the energy from the band feels genuine. Not playing by the numbers, but feeling it and showing that they enjoy what they are doing. I like being surprised. This was a pleasure and should see some time on the turntable. —Donofthedead (Loud Punk)

ERGS!, THE / THE MEASURE [SA]: Split 7"

The Ergs!: Nope, not back from the grave; not pulling a Nirvana, Sublime, or Tupac, where dead people keep on releasing "new" music. It's just that in this imperfect world of punk vinyl, shit recorded gets out of sequence of shit being released. I know there's more Ergs! vinyl coming out (*Thrash Compactor*) on the way, I believe, along with a split with Teenage Bottlerocket) that was recorded prior to *That's It... Bye!* It's all bittersweet math, though, since we're on the final pages of a book I don't want to end. The Ergs! decimated many of the concrete walls of pop punk like Hulk smashing puny jello cups in massive fists, cheerfully squirting that goo which choked out so, so many lesser bands. Measure [SA]: it's the small stuff that makes 'em so great, like young, funny Chevy Chase on the cover, how they can

make the political "Dullards and Dreadful Prose" sound like the bad relationship it is; a relationship of the far right and their courting of America's soul and not just stuff like "Limbaugh suck dog tit." Yup. Big fan of both. —Todd (No Idea)

ESPRIT DE CORPS:
Under Constant Influence: CD

Kind of a '90s screamo attack that's also somehow catchy and surprisingly unpretentious. It's an odd grouping of sounds that works well for these guys: some nice gang vocals over punchy, nearly-anthemic dancepunk. Okay, yes, maybe review deadlines are looming and "dancepunk" conjures up something icky like the Faint. So scratch that. But I'd still be up for saying that EDC comes across as a workable, brick-and-mortar mishmash of Lost Patrol's catchy dance shit and Orchid's spastic hammer-yowls, with some Super Black Market toeing the line and smoothing things out in between. Add some nice chipboard packaging and friendly liner notes, consider the fact that they have a keyboardist who actually adds something rather than hinders or neuters the band, and Esprit De Corps comes out of the gate here with a pretty nice five-songer. Look forward to hearing what they come up with next. —Keith Rosson (Esprit De Corps)

ESTROGEN HIGHS: *Tell It to Them: LP*

Estrogen Highs has a lot going for them. Their label (Dead Beat) sends out LPs for review. The LP they sent me came free of PR bullshit. Which means Dead

Beat is not trying to fuck with me (or you) in such a patronizing way. And I think Gestapo Khazi is a labelmate of the Estrogen Highs; being even tangentially associated with John Roller puts you in good stead with me. *Tell It to Them* is a solid LP. A little bit Demon's Claw—definitely into 13th Floor Elevators. The musicianship is strong. The guitar playing has that raw Eddie Cochran feel in some places—and the solo on "Age of Romantics" is aces. I'm also pleased that the bass is far from buried in the mix—it's heard and felt. Most LPs in this vein skimp on the low end (a quality synonymous with mid-'60s recordings) and that's just ridiculous. (Don't make the same mistake the early Gun Club did.) Affirmative on this one, amigos. —Ryan Leach (Dead Beat)

EVERYTHING FALLS APART: *Relief: LP*

This is a serious helping of thinking man's hardcore. While a lot of bands are getting noisier as a way to increase the aggressiveness, Everything Falls Apart seem to be really zoning in on some great melodies and non-cock riffs, while still retaining the '80s HC influence. Consistently powerful, while definitely mixing it up and creating their sound. It's great to hear a band develop without jumping off the deep end. Anyone who has a soft spot for pre-*Hidden World Fucked Up* should check this out. —Daryl (Self-released)

EXPLODE AND MAKE UP: 12": EP

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hardcore with powerful, melodic vocals. If you like Dag Nasty, Lifetime, 7 Seconds, or Gorilla Biscuits and you need some cheering up, this is the antidote to your blues. Let me put it this way, this record made me smile while I was folding my fucking laundry. —CT Terry (*Underground Communiqué*, undercomm.org)

FLESHIES: *Brown Flag*: LP

Weirdo DIY punk and arena rock coming together like chocolate and peanut butter, Fleshies, are really one of the most interesting bands in a long time. It's funny, because before *Scrape the Walls* was released, I was predicting it to be their most straight forward effort, and then turned out to be very, very wrong. But now that they've settled into their own personal studio, taking their sweet time to really polish this one (and bring on more subtle Guns'n'Roses/arena rock comparisons). It's definitely their most straight forward, and is absolutely great, though it still leaves me a little conflicted, because that weirdness was the charm of their older records. Though after repeated listens, there's still *some* weirdness, it's just a little more buried/subconscious. Either way, Fleshies records are like apples and oranges—you can't compare them on their own, but they're all still excellent in their own way. And hopefully they'll be back from this "hiatus" nonsense.

—Joe Evans III (Recess)

FLIPPER: *Love*: CD

Flipper has once again shaken off the dirt of death and risen up—this time with assistance from former Nirvana bass playing giant Krist Novoselic—to discomfort the world with more of their sonic elefantiasis. Ten new apoplectic, apocalyptic dirges pustulating with more ennui and existential ooze than all the fidgeting hamburger that was ever in John Paul Sartre's head. These are the lullabies of an autopsy; an autopsy that's somehow turned into a Hermann Nitsch performance, where the entrails are hung on the walls like garland and warm and rubbery vital organs become unspeakable sex toys. Back in the early '80s, Flipper was obviously a dissonant deconstruction of punk, but now it might be more accurate to say that they're a dissonant deconstruction of post-punk. It's dirty work, but somebody's gotta do it. My only gripe with *Love* is that their dadaistic sense of humor, exemplified in classics like "Ha Ha Ha," "Brainwash," and "The Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" sadly seems to have been packed into the urn along with the remains of Will Shatter. And Flipper without their absurdist humor is like a thalidomide baby without a clown nose. Hopefully the twisted sense of humor will grow back like a happy little tumor in time for the next album. What's important now is that Flipper is back and primed to jerk the chains of all sanctimonious punks everywhere. And I, for one, couldn't be happier. —Aphid Peevit (MVD audio)

FONTANA: Self-titled: CD

Some bands sound like Black Flag, but Fontana picked the *My War* era to be inspired by. Hell yeah. Moody waves of dark, screechy guitar and strained vocals—speedy to slow—and then shove the song into reverse while going 100 mph. Real tight, real catchy, real damn good. I don't mean a retreat of the early '80s, dirt but a real exciting new band with that vibe and doesn't seem to take themselves too seriously. Not to mention you can usually trust the taste of X! Records. The back has Pettibon-style drawings and tiny fucked up sentences. At first, I thought that was taking the Flag image too far. But then I realized it says, "You just see what you think, not what you see" over a drawing of a duck head. Hell yeah. —Speedway Randy (X!)

GEARS: *Rockin' at Ground Zero*: CD

D.I.S. THE: *Rare Cuts*: CD

Rockin' at Ground Zero is one of those releases that anyone even remotely interested in underground music should have in their collection, period. No discussion, no hall pass, no excuses. Yes, it is indeed that goddamned essential, a pitch-perfect example of what happens when girl-crazy, A-bomb fearin' teenage brats intent on giving punk a rockabilly undertow instead stumble upon bona fide art. It's been released in a number of incarnations and formats over the past nearly thirty years, and this time they've augmented the album's original fifteen tracks and the oft-included three-track *Let's Go*

to the Beach EP with five additional demo tracks, so if you happen to be one of the total dweebs who has yet to procure a copy, now's the time, bucko. Not long after the Gears threw in the towel, Axxel and Dave started a new band, the D.I.s, and for the next few years L.A. punks confused them with Casey Royer's band D.I., another legendary Southern California punk rock band in its own right. Axxel 'n Dave's band took the Gears sound as its foundation and veered off in a number of interesting ways, first following many of their early Hollywood punk peers into roots rock and then slowly adding in some of the hard rock and glam influences that, by the end of the '80s, dominated the L.A. club scene. Collected on *Rare Cuts* are twenty-two tracks spanning their ten-year existence and feature a slew of sidemen who made their bones in some of L.A.'s greatest bands. Maybe it's age, 'cause I clearly remember seeing the D.I.s a number of times when they were around and really not thinkin' too much of 'em, but what I'm hearing here causes me to revisit that assessment. Most of what's here complements *Rockin' at Ground Zero* quite nicely, illustrating what happens when you get enough of a chance to take an idea so far that you end up back where you started, which is pretty much what happened—as I recall, once the D.I.s bit the dust, the Gears were back in action, and they've more or less remained so ever since.

—Jimmy Alvarado (Hepcat)

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GESTAPO KHAZI: Self-titled: 12" EP

Those in the know are talking these guys up. Surprisingly, it's no hype. All truth and nothing but. First time I heard about these guys was from Gabe of the Starvations. On a dirty Sunset Blvd. sidewalk in Silverlake, he told me they were a must see/hear band. Weeks later, I get a sterile email from a friend in the Bay Area about this band. He, too, was telling me I must see/hear them. I have yet to see them live. However, I did grab this record when I saw it looking back at me in the box of records here at the Razorcake bunker. Out of the stack I took home that day, this is the one that stands out the most. Gestapo Khazi (ex-Street Trash, and Geisha Girls) have a definite Gun Club influence. But they also have a strong surf rock influence. If Gun Club listened to more Dick Dale and the Ventures instead of the blues, it may have sounded like this. The guitar playing is excellent. Unbelievably so. Listen to "Time Eats Time." The song slows down a bit then, suddenly, this guitar comes in and takes it to another place. It's pret' near mindblowing. So good, it makes you wonder what the hell has been going on for the past number of years. All too many bands are content with being mediocre and doing just enough to please a docile audience. Here's a band that says fuck all that, they're leaving the rest behind in the dust. Why settle for less, when you can have Gestapo Khazi? Get yourself some. You deserve it. Hell, you need it! —M.Avg (Dead Beat)

GHOSTLIMB / FICSHER: Split: 10"

Fischer: in the past, I've gotten in trouble for referring to this band as emo, but I just don't hear the pop punk reference that so many people claim there to be. Between the mathy change-ups and the intricate guitarin', their sound lies amidst the spectrum of the whole Dischord/Jade Tree/Kill Rock Stars world more than anything else I can think of. But, bless the innovators and their constant struggle for new, sometimes-interesting things. Ghostlimb: this band kills it with their brand of all-out, forgive-no-one hardcore that's modern in its presence, but applied to the approach of yesteryear. Both these bands offer top notch material and anyone inclined to check out two of California's most daring, should check out this record. —Daryl (Great Plains/Vitriol)

GHOSTLIMB / FISCHER: Split: 10"

First off, *beautiful* packaging and vinyl. Orange wax, nicely designed sleeve under a transparent/printed bag ala the new Ringers 12"; just a rock-solid visual aesthetic. Seems like Vitriol is run—at least in part—by folks in Graf Orlock, so it comes as no big shock that the graphics here, thankfully, seem just as important as the sonics. On that angle alone, nice work to everyone involved. And as far as the actual music? Fischer seems to have come leaps and bounds from their first 7", and I actually really liked that record. But this is something else entirely; they're coming into something of their own, but for comparison's sake, it sounds like a layered, seasoned, and exuberant North Lincoln. Keep in mind, they're just

a two piece. Which is pretty impressive when one listens to a song like "All the Real Girls" and hears just how full, fleshed-out, and emotionally resonant it sounds. Awesome work. Meanwhile, Ghostlimb's a new one to me. They're a snarling, swaggering band that's a bit hard to pin down. There's occasional blips of emo breakdowns circa 1993 or so, but it's all firmly rooted in a kind of rock template and fronted by a guy who's retainer sounds like it's made of concrete. They sound like if Go Sell Drugs tried to cover a Rites of Spring song, okay? Their side of the split is tough and dark and just a bit off and it works ridiculously well. All told, this record is a testament to both of the bands and, yeah, the vinyl format as a whole. Absolutely, totally worth it—I'll most likely be playing this one years down the road.

—Keith Rosson (Vitriol)

GRAVEHOUSE: Untitled: CDEP

This EP is a soundtrack for the descent to Hell. Equal parts drone, doom, and minimalistic, this is pretty kewl instrumental stuff taking cues from Japan's Boris and Sunn O))). Three tracks clocking in at just over twenty-one minutes, the first song, "Untitled + Hollow Mind," starts off with feedback whine and merges into an almostromantic guitar melody. "OffFeather" kicks off with heavy, sluggish riffs layered on top of a slow, methodical, meat-pounding beat. If you dig creepy, atmospheric tones or really like the soundtrack to *Rosemary's Baby*, this is for you. Recommended. —Kristen K (Television)

GUT REACTIONS: Bored: 7"

Good ,overdriven, low-fi rock and roll. "Bored" and "Leave Me Alone" are mid-tempo rockers with overdriven guitars and distorted vocals. "Ballad of Logan Potter" breaks the mold a bit into heavier-sounding big beat territory. Good combination of songs. Good band. —Billups Allen (Bachelor)

HEADLINERS, THEE: Rain & Blood: CD

This is one helluva album. Incorporating all the music genres that I love, Thee Headliners hit all the marks of Americana, invoking catchy elements of blues and country with male and female harmonies. Jeremy's baritone vocals are nearly comical in "Howling at the Moon," which found me doing just that. "Double Dutch" and "Sketch City" veer toward surf and bouncy, high octane garage rock. Just when I thought they wouldn't throw me another curveball, they upped the ante with Holly's soulful, "You Don't Know." All over the map, but good stuff. Recommended. —Kristen K (Starcleaner, myspace.com/starcleanerrecords)

HIDDEN SPOTS: Self-titled: LP

Being a small town punk in his late '30s, I'm going to take some stabs here, and it's based on a talk I had with my friend, Matt's Incredible. In the mid-to-late '80s, punk rock as we know it was in pretty bad shape. The first and second waves had come and gone, yet it was still slowly infiltrating the lower population centers in America: the high desert, the Midwest, the South. So, it wouldn't be completely out of the question to find

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a Suicidal Tendencies or JFA record then picking something from an active, pushed band on college radio that was more ruffle-cuffed, overly melodic, and largely English. Cure. OMD. Depeche Mode. The Bolshoi. Icicle Works. Love And Rockets. Flesh For Lulu. Simple Minds. For fuck's sake, there was no interweb, barely no instant anything when it came to underground music. "New" could be a decade. So when the gruff-voiced Eric Nelson launches into covers of two of the aforementioned bands, a couple of the pins drop in the lock to the safe to further understanding the riches of the Hidden Spots. 1.) Fuck pretense. Blame the world and society, but don't blame people over thirty for knowing and liking this stuff, word-for-word, unironically. 2.) There are valuable lessons to be learned from "Duckie Rock" (*Pretty in Pink*) by many bands, especially in the hooks and melodies departments. 3.) Reclamation, Chattanooga Cultural Division, has made one of the most exciting, powerful, and positive full length records in all of 2009. It spits fire at organized religion, the concept of national pride, and hugs its friends closely with as much ferocity. I'm agog on how great this is and I was already on "Mike Pack Shit-stained High Five" bandwagon a couple years back. —Todd (Mauled By Tigers)

HIGHER GIANT: Al's Moustache: 7"

You know those supergroups that showcase aging, once-great punks crooning boring post-punk indignities? Fortunately, Higher Giant is *not* one of

those bands. Instead, they're an earnest, lovable melodic punk outfit featuring hardcore legend Ernie Parada (Token Entry) on vocals and guitar, backed by members of Warzone, Lifetime, Kid Dynamite, Paint It Black, and The Arsons. Growing up doesn't have to mean growing into lameness. As simplistic as hardcore pretends to be, there are some fucking sharp musicians hiding in the mix. Four of them are rocking out in Higher Giant. I can't wait for a full-length from these guys. This EP is on beautiful colored vinyl, with a free digital download included. It's a truly excellent sampling of unimposing, post-core brilliance. The emergence of *Al's Moustache* will make you rethink your desire to euthanize the old guy in the back of the room. —Art Ettinger (Black Numbers, theblacknumbers.com)

HINDI GUNS, THE: (Many Many) Miles Away: CD Single

It seems there are two The Hindi Guns—one from Los Angeles and one from Portland, Oregon—and appears that they share a couple of band members. Not that it matters much, as far as I can tell. For the record, this is the Stumptown version of the band. This is a great looking CD single designed to look like a 7" record. Unfortunately, the music doesn't live up to the promise of the packaging. "(Many Many) Miles Away" alternates between a nonchalant groove during the verses and an awkward, cringe-inducing chorus. It's the vocals that make this so unbearable a listening

experience. I want to smack the slack jawed, Lou Reed vocal delivery out of the singer's mouth. "Loaded Gun" is a Dandy Warhols throw away, which is saying it sucks something awful since the Dandy's stuff is garbage. College indie rock, Brit pop wannabe schlock. —Josh Benke (French Fan Club, myspace.com/hindiguns)

HOSTAGE LIFE / KNUCKLEHEAD: Split: 7"

Longshot Records continues to impress with another hearty entry in their split series. Showcasing two Canadian streetpunk bands from opposite coasts, this release brings together Western Canada's Knucklehead with Ontario's Hostage Life. As is bound to happen with splits from time to time, one side is way stronger than the other. Although Hostage Life is nothing to frown upon, The Knucklehead track side is an instant classic. It's like sharing a pizza with someone who ordered something you like, but don't love on their half. You can still share it, even though you'd rather have hot peppers on the whole pie. Knucklehead is super fucking melodic and danceable, reminiscent of Reducers SF. Hostage Life are in the same vein, but are somehow a little bland. I bet Hostage Life was great live, although they sadly called it quits at the end of 2009. Kudos goes to Longshot for continuing to spread wondrous oi and streetpunk across the globe. —Art Ettinger (Longshot)

HYDEOUTS: Creeps at Night: 7"

I wish there was something that allowed bands to do research to find out if the

concept they have stumbled onto has already been used, exhausted even, by bands that came before them. Perhaps if there was a world wide web of information, accessible at the click of a button, the guys in the Hydeouts could have Googled... err, I mean, researched "Rock and Roll Is Dead" and found out that, yes, the idea of a rock band rockin' out about how rock has kicked the bucket has in fact been played out. That bastard Lenny Kravitz made me sick of the concept. Actually, the lunatic who lived in the apartment above me and blasted Crappit's greatest hits over and over for full days at a time is to blame for the fact that I now get completely enraged when I hear the words "Rock and Roll Is Dead." It's like I've got some weird form of rock and roll PTSD. Now, if the Hydeouts had done a song called "Horror Rock Is Dead," this whole thing could have been avoided. Awww, I can't be too hard on these guys. The fact is that the song is good, and they more than redeem themselves on the flipside with "The Creeps at Night," a monster stomper that totally hits the mark. —MP Johnson (Creepy Anthem, myspace.com/thehydeouts)

IDLE HANDS: Volatile Matters: 7"

One of my favorite bands on the planet made up of some of my favorite people on the planet. Whatev. I can review objectively. That said; this is totally awesome. If you were into their *Postponed* LP and/or their amazing self-titled EP, get ready for Idle Hands' best songs yet. I had the great pleasure

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of seeing these songs performed every night for two weeks this summer. Not for a second did I tire of them, and I still find myself spinning this record multiple times a day. For any not familiar, imagine a slightly darker, faster Statues with some uniquely European elements that are tough to put your finger on and you'd be pretty close. Get all of this band's records immediately. So, so great and that much better when you know that the guys behind the songs are *all* heart. —Dave Williams (Rockstar)

IMPULSE INTERNATIONAL, THE: Point of Action: LP

Finally! This is something I've been waiting for since last year. After a few singles in the past couple years, The Impulse International have seen fit to put out this full length album; high-energy power pop with some British mod influences throughout. Well played with a slight bit of rawness that keeps things loose and fun. The pacing is perfect. They come on quick and keep the energy up. They switch into a moderate pace here and there to break things up, with songs like "Rooftops & Bus Stops," "Pretty Girls," and the awesome "Automatic Breakdown." Songs like "Tina, No" and "I Found You" remind me of the Undertones, and, you know, that's a good thing. Supreme record all the way through. Worth the wait. —M. Avrg (Deranged)

IN DEFENCE: Into the Sewer: CD

I still love me some really heavy, fast bands. Problem is, I can't stand ninety-

five percent of the other people into really heavy, fast bands (even more so in the live setting). That's what I love about In Defence. Hard as hell, but substituting the macho bullshit that comes with a lot of this stuff for light-hearted goofiness that isn't afraid to poke fun at the genre. And besides, musically speaking, they absolutely rip. "Straight Edge Hangover" is the anthem I've been waiting for, for a long time. One of the best hardcore/thrash bands going right now? I think so. Tacos forever. —Joe Evans III (Learning Curve)

INBRED, TH: Legacy of Fertility: CD

Though fairly obscure now, Th' Inbred were a quasi-known band amongst punk's great unwashed back in the '80s. In their relatively short period of existence they managed a self-released EP and two LPs for Toxic Shock (a label that was quite the bee's knees in its own right in that time) before throwing in the towel in '88. All of the above—*Reproduction*, *A Family Affair* and *Kissin' Cousins*, respectively—and a few unreleased tunes have been compiled by the good folks at Alternative Tentacles so that a new generation of punters can hear what all the fuss was about. What you get for your buck are a truckload of thrash tunes heavily tempered with jazzisms, wild tempo, and rhythm shifts and sarcasm-tinged lyrics that are not afraid to piss on religion, politics, and, especially, the punk scene itself. While the stuff here might occasionally seem a little quaint after twenty-odd

years of explorations into hardcore's various hues, there are still enough surprises to be found to keep the most jaded Mohican guessing. Having not heard 'em since the respective releases on here were new, it was nice to revisit a band that managed to retain a sense of self when the rest of the scene pretty much actively pandered to some pretty stupid and stifling pigeonholes. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alternative Tentacles)

INTENSIVES / PANIK ATTAK: Split 7"

The Intensives play slightly down tempo (for hardcore) hardcore, which they're damn fine at. A sort-of tightness reigns, with grit chorus and focused beam, and they know when to end a song—never a problem with hardcore, I guess—which is loudly and quickly. While Panik Attak says: "We sound like echoes of these mangled bands, if they were to cram into clown cars, speed head on into each other, scraped off the pavement and molded into four ugly rejects". Their description definitely isn't wrong, but it's more of a reverbed, talk-singing Rob Halford backed by Dirt McGirt hardcore with rock and roll leathers, all recorded (of course) in a basement. —Andrew Flanagan (Longshot, myspace.com/longshotmusic)

INTO THE STORM: Amidst a Sea of Chaos: CD

Dang! Initially, this band's name and CD artwork had me expecting a third-rate metal band. Not the case. It's kind of hard to explain exactly what Into The Storm sounds like. Much of this record

sounds like *I, Fail*-era The Spectacle-meets-Catharsis, but the music occasionally ventures into Breather Resist/Young Widows and/or *Oceanic*-era Isis territory, without remaining drone-y for too long. There's even some 90s "screamo" vibe going on here, like Shotmaker-style rock parts. It's also smattered with off-kilter, atonal leads ala Black Flag and even captures some of that SST tone like St. Vitus or later Bl'ast. Regardless of *who* it sounds like, it's heavy without being metallic, quirky in that Washington way, super intense, and fucking awesome. Lyrics are dark and poetic but hopeful without getting too corny. Even the aesthetic of the name and layout lost its "metalness" once I spent some time with the record. Great dynamics, cool samples, very '90s. Right up my alley. —Dave Williams (Alive & Breathing, rideintothestorm.com)

INTRO5PECT: Record Profits: CD

I first heard these guys a few years ago from a collaboration they did with Sta's of Leftover Crack/Star Fucking Hipsters. The band's a fairly unique-sounding mash-up of Anti-Flag style political punk and electro synths and drums. It's actually better than it sounds. Seven tracks is about right, too, because the songs can start to sound similar after a bit because of the electronic percussion (which actually supplements a live drummer). The one big complaint I have about this CD is the last track "Plastic World," which is a Naked Aggression cover. The lyrics

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to that song are just incredibly bad, and it becomes really clear when Sara the synth player takes the lead vocals. Her voice makes the song sound annoyingly close to an eighth grade diary entry set (loosely) to music. Cut that song off and you get a pretty solid EP. —Adrian (A-F/Geykido Comet)

JAPANTHER: *Divorce/Evil Earth: 7"*

There are only two songs, but I've probably played them over a hundred times each since I got the record last week. "Divorce" is a weird/sad song that somehow sounds like Toys That Kill and The Spits at the same time. "Evil Earth" shouldn't work. It's got the most clichéd punk rock chorus ever, but is saved by the strategic deployment of a few refrains of "Yeah, motherfucker!" That'll get it done. —Jim Ruland (Arkam, myspace.com/arkamrecords)

JAY BANERJEE:

Three-Song Sampler: CDEP

Kinda an early '80s vibe (think: the Rubinoos, but much less produced). Note: to avoid you, the reader, having the experience I had while reading *MRR* when I was fifteen, here's an explanatory sentence: the Rubinoos started in the early '80s, power pop, but heavy on the pop. Very worth checking out! As for Jay Banerjee, I wish the guitar sound was stronger, but I could see this guy's next release being super, super good. The first two songs are the best, so, Mr. Banerjee, please stick with the catchier variety of sounds! Also worth noting: this guy appears

to lack a label (this is self-released), so please take note, punk businessmen and women! Also, my extensive research has uncovered his blog, which features a hilarious entry about bad band names, a topic near and dear to my heart. Brief literary sample: "If your band starts with 'The' but is not followed by a plural or collective noun, you probably suck. I'm qualifying this because several exceptions spring immediately to mind—The Left Banke, The Action, The Jolt, The (Paul Collins) Beat, etc.—but you haven't heard of any of them, so you suck." If this were a cereal, it'd be Cheerios with sugar added by the consumer. Please, become Honey Nut Cheerios! You can do it! —Maddy (Self-released, jaybanerjee.net)

JELLO BIAFRA AND THE GUANTANAMO SCHOOL OF MEDICINE: *The Audacity of Hype: CD*

The Good: Biafra's lyrics remain as witty and topical as ever, and the band he's recruited lean more towards his collaborations with the Melvins than Lard, whose output always wavered between "wow" and "ugh" for me. There are no overt, pointed criticisms of Obama leveled here, but I think it's a safe bet they will be along shortly, with good reason. The Bad: While the band knows how to milk the most out of a groove, the bulk of the songs are a bit long. Probably an odd and petty complaint, but it seems to me the point to some of the songs here could've been made more succinctly in about half the time. Chalk it up to personal preference.

The Ugly: It seems the more time passes, the more relevant the bulk of Biafra's work becomes. If anything, the social order he's lampooned and railed against since the 1970s is regressing rather than progressing. —Jimmy Alvarado (Alternative Tentacles)

JOEY CORMAN: *Boneyard Betty: CD*

I know exactly what you want to hear. First off, you don't want anything that involves electric instruments, right? And I know you're sick of drums. That's just a bunch of caveman pounding. Who needs it? You're flinging to hear three magical chords strummed on a lonely old acoustic guitar, aren't you? Not only that, but you would totally poop yourself if that guitar was an accompaniment to some whining, pop punk folk shit. You know, the kind that you used to hear once in a while at open mic nights at that little café next to the university. Because I know you went there all the time, right? That's where the good stuff went down. Oh heck yeah. —MP Johnson (Self-released)

JOHNNY COCK AND THE NUTS / PUBLIC DEFECATION: *Up Split Creek Volume 1: Split CD*

It's a scum punk standoff! Johnny Cock And The Nuts going up against Public Defecation in a no holds barred rumble. JC And The N make the first move. Uh oh. It's a song about getting old... but wait, what's that they're following it up with? It looks like a Motörhead cover. That's got to hurt. And what next? Songs about booze, babes, and

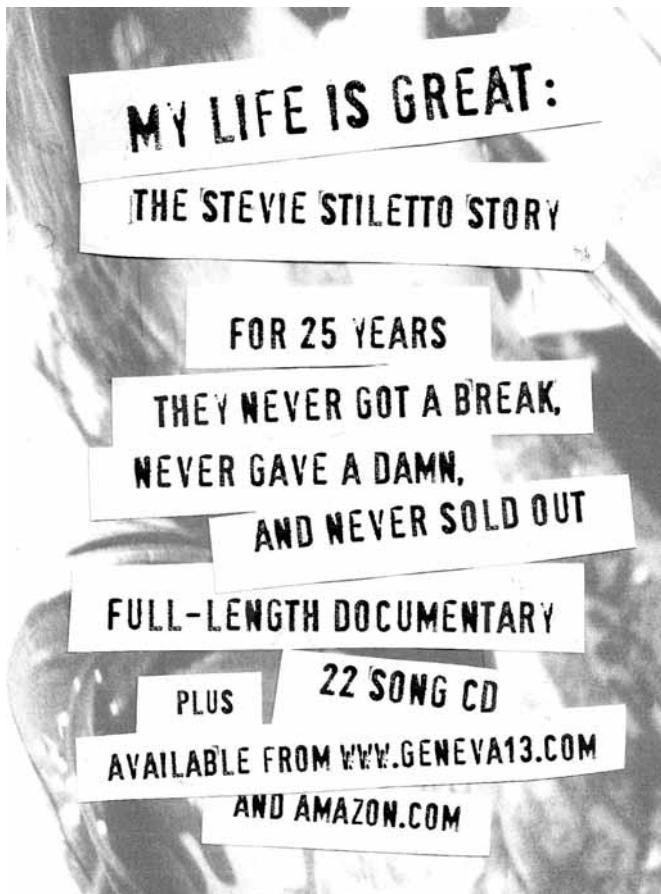
Santa Claus. But they spelled it "Santa Clause." Someone's been watching bad Tim Allen movies again, and that's just the opportunity that PD needed to sneak in with "The Beginning of the End." Absolute violence. Growling, grating and blood-spilling. The sound of feces and razors, wielded with anger. The winner of this match is clear. —MP Johnson (Records On Tap)

JUNK, THE: *Novus Ordo Seclorum: CDEP*

The Junk is a fast ska-core band from the U.K. with interesting dub and reggae influences. The cover art showcasing pigs beating down a protestor suggests an anarcho-punk groove, but this short EP is too overproduced to induce any kind of political urgency. And true or not, there's a feel that a lot of the instrumentals were recorded separately rather than live. Still, these three songs left me craving more, with each being pretty damn well crafted. It takes brass balls to include this much brass on a punk record in the new millennium, so there's not a lot to knock here. The Junk are anything but. —Art Ettinger (12 Step Plan)

JUST DIE!: *Garages and Basements: 7"*

Furious, speedy hardcore that didn't forget to pack the melody along before it explodes out of the gate at a hundred MPH; strong songwriting and definite nods to everything from '80s skate rock shredding to soaring choruses reminiscent of Hot Water Music. A hell of a six song 7" by this band from Asheville. I'm glad I got exposed to them. —Jake Shut (Self Aware/Dead End)



KESTRELS: Primary Colours: CD

Oh Kestrels, your CD wouldn't play correctly in my player half the time. But when it did play, I liked what I heard: fuzzy guitar pop with some shoegazer tendencies. It seemed to be a bit more on the analog side of things, as the sound wasn't clean, but I think it suits the band quite well. Unfortunately, after a little while, I grew bored because it wasn't Slayer. So I went and listened to *World Painted Blood* instead. —Kurt Morris (Noyes, noyesrecords.com)

KING AUTOMATIC:***In the Blue Corner: CD***

Yet another Voodoo Rhythm release that transports the listener to far gone times and places. King Automatic provides a musical time machine that makes stops in '60s go-go Paris, 1920s Louisiana Cajun country, and San Francisco garages circa 1990. He effortlessly combines elements of blues, garage rock, jazz, and country and western to create a unique musical odyssey. I'm partial to the straightforward rock'n'roll stuff, like the sultry twanger, "Let's Have a Party," and "Vague Information," an organ-driven dance floor filler. But, moodier numbers like "There Is No Truth in the Night" and "Staircase Serenade" are equally satisfying. What's most amazing about these tunes is that King Automatic plays them as a one man band, a terrific feat when you hear all that's going on in them sonically—keyboards, drums, guitars, harp. Simply incredible. —Josh Benke (Voodoo Rhythm)

KING FRIDAY: Married Alive: CD

This band is almost indistinguishable from Fay Wray. And, upon further reference, it turns out that King Friday features members of Fay Wray, so there you go. If you like Fay Wray, there is a ninety-seven percent chance that you'd like this. Side note: They have a song called "I Wish I was in Radon," which, given the fact that Radon is one of the best bands of all time, immediately attracted my attention, but oddly enough, that song sounds nothing like Radon, while the song before it sorta *does* sound like Radon, but in a less punk way. If this were a cereal, it'd be the generic version of Golden Grahams. I'm not saying in *any* way that Radon is Golden Grahams. Radon is Lucky Charms. Golden Grahams is on the border between a low-tier and a middle-tier cereal. Yes, I keep track of such things! —Maddy (Fast Crowd)

KOBANES: Japan Invasion: CD

The kids know what's up and, all of a sudden, the kids are really into The Kobanes, with T-shirts and other merch cropping up en masse. A split label Japanese release to coincide with one of the band's infamous Japanese tours, *Japan Invasion* is a very solid, mainline pop punk album. Taking 1990s silliness to new peaks with songs about loved ones smelling each other's feces, suburban ghettos, dicks, and drugs, The Kobanes' lyrics are gleefully apolitical, mean-spirited, and downright asinine. And that's a compliment! Driving, Queers-inspired riffs dominate the mix,

with geek-tinged vocals maintaining a spirited, tongue-in-ass-cheek vibe. A higher end byproduct of a dwindling subgenre, *Japan Invasion* happily invaded this aging pop punker's heavy rotation. There's even a cover of "Fan Mail" included for Dickies fans. Plus, any album that starts with a dialog sample from *Class of Nuke 'em High* is okay by me. —Art Ettinger (Fixing a Hole, fixingahole.jpn.org / Dumb!, dumbrecords.com)

MARKED MEN / THIS IS MY FIST:**Split 7"EP**

Marked Men: C'mon, really? If you haven't at least checked out the Marked Men, just put this zine down and go find some recordings. Shit, dude or lady, if you're standing in a record store, don't buy this zine if there's some Marked Men vinyl to be had in the vicinity and you can't afford to buy both. What else do you need as an endorsement? How many publications will entirely supplicate to a band, encouraging you to just go and listen to the music? As always, the Marked Men are pitch perfect, no-genre-can-pigeon-hole them music that's accurate and reasonable to call punk, but it's so much more. This Is My Fist: Putting this in the "mental health versus making great punk songs" algorithm, part of me wishes that Annie of TIMF finds solace and happiness because, man, she's been mistreated time and time again if we're to take her lyrics literally. The other part of me—perhaps the selfish, dick part—keeps being impressed by her output and how much gas is left in TIMF's tank, especially after all the personnel changes. Perhaps sadness is her ghost, her fire, her muse. —Todd (No Idea)

MAX AND THE MAKEUPS:**Self-titled: EP**

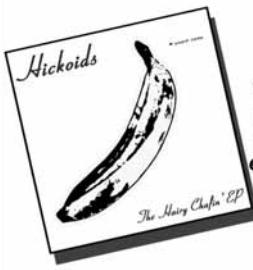
Here's a lost punk gem from Austin, TX. The four songs on here were recorded in 1984, and I believe this is the first time these were ever on vinyl (which is strange, considering how good these songs are). Catchy

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and tuneful punk rock with some new wave touches. The stand out track is "60 Minute Man." The main riff in that song sounds similar to a riff in the Butthole Surfers' "Gary Floyd" (which was recorded three years after this song. Hmmm...). Texas had some great bands coming out in the early years of punk rock, and everything I've heard from that region and during that era has been gold. So, with that in mind, get this record. —M.Avg (Puke n Vomit, pukenvomitrecords.com)

MISFITS: Land of the Dead: 12"

Let's move past the whole "they shouldn't even be called the Misfits anymore" argument, okay? It's old. It's boring. The Jerry Only-fronted version of the band has now existed longer than both of the previous incarnations of the band. There are now kids arguing that they shouldn't even be called the Misfits anymore because Michale Graves isn't in the band, kids who don't really give two shits about that Danzig guy. I'm not saying it's right. I'm just saying that's what's going on. Let's all stop ranting about names and start ranting about what really matters: the music. This 12" single includes the first two original songs recorded by the Jerry Only, Dez Cadena, and Robo lineup. Since this lineup has basically been touring nonstop for nearly a decade, my hopes were jacked up really high. There was talk that the stuff they had been working on was going to be hardcore, *Earth A.D.* style. Then I saw the mind-blowing cover art that reconfigures the crimson ghost

as a zombie and learned that the songs were inspired by the George Romero's living dead films. Then I pushed play. The chorus of "Land of the Dead" goes something like "Toniiiight! Zombies walk! Land of the dead!" Yikes. When we last heard Only's golden throat, it was on the *Project 1950* album. There he sounded like a mechanic singing along to the hits of the '50s while getting grease on his hands working under a car. Here, he basically sounds the same, except instead of singing along to classics, he's making up nonsense words about the walking dead. The fact that his caterwauling is cranked up too high in the mix doesn't help. I mean, he's buried his own barbaric bass bashing, which is one of the highlights of their current sound. Also, while I didn't really expect anything astounding from Robo, I had hoped that Dez would come up with something a little more exciting than the murky distortion lurking around on this record. Fuck. Who am I kidding? I love this shit. —MP Johnson (Misfits, misfitsrecords.com)

MOUTHBREATHER/ENVIRONMENTAL YOUTH CRUNCH: Split 7"

Mouthbreather's tracks were knocked out at Viking Recording Company. The first one is titled "Call Me Legion." It features lyrics about burning churches to the ground. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking this has got to be the most inappropriately named (or perhaps most accurately named, depending on your take on the genre) black metal band ever. You're wrong, because they're not

black metal at all. They're not ugly enough to be black metal. They're not even as ugly as EYC (which, in reality, stands for Erotic Yam Corpse). EYC's music is a lot uglier. It's not ugly as in mean, but ugly as in rough. It's nicer though. They probably hug their friends after shows. Big, sweaty, ugly punk rock hugs. —MP Johnson (Rorschach)

NEON NIGHTS:

Stay Good Stay Gold Stay High: CD

Early Guns'n'Roses, chunky power chords, plus AC/DC speed comprise the two main ingredients of Seattle's Neon Nights. This three piece has taken the elements of '80s metal and jumpstarted it back to life. With hardcore drumbeats the likes of G.B.H. and Circle Jerks plus screeching that conjures the ghost of Sam Kinison, it's easy to see how these boys are tearing Seattle apart. Keep an eye on these three. Recommended. —Kristen K (Rockin' Stan)

NERVOUS DOGS: Great Doors: 7"EP

Depression, defiance, fires, and formlessness. Raspy-voiced. Smoke-filled lungs—from both wildfires and enclosed spaces. It's Florida punk with much to owe to Spoke, Fay Wray, and Clairmel, the lesser-known structures which Hot Water Music would one day build its foundations on. The Nervous Dogs are confessional but not anthemic. They hide their melodies like a well-concealed flask and play bodies of songs heavily scarred, but with the slightest of smiles on the lips. They aren't a band that is likely to blow you

away immediately, but if you like them on first spin, chances heavily weigh toward that fondness will continue to grow. —Todd (Bakery Outlet)

NIAGRA & THE HITMEN:

St. Valentine's Day Massacre: CD

Okay, not sure I grasp all the particulars, so forgive me if some of the following info is suspect, but from what I can gather, the bulk of this is comprised of a live recording of a band called the Hitmen performing a set of tunes by another band, Dark Carnival. The latter's lead singer, Niagra, joined the Hitmen for this live set to honor the legacy of Dark Carnival/Stooges guitarist Ron Asheton, who had a hand in penning all the Dark Carnival and Stooges classics the band performed that night. As can be expected, the songs are heavy with trancelike, primal, and sleaze-infested Stoogeisms, with Niagra and company putting in the requisite work to make this one of the better Detroit punk-related artifacts available. —Jimmy Alvarado (Steel Cage)

NO FRIENDS: CD

Supergroups rarely seem to live up to expectations, and this one's no exception. No Friends is made up of the bulk of guys from the now-defunct New Mexican Disaster Squad and fronted by the yowler for Municipal Waste. For a lot of people it probably sounds like a dream, like some kind of thrash/punk bestial coupling of a lion and a unicorn. Unfortunately, it's also one of those records that reads a lot better on paper

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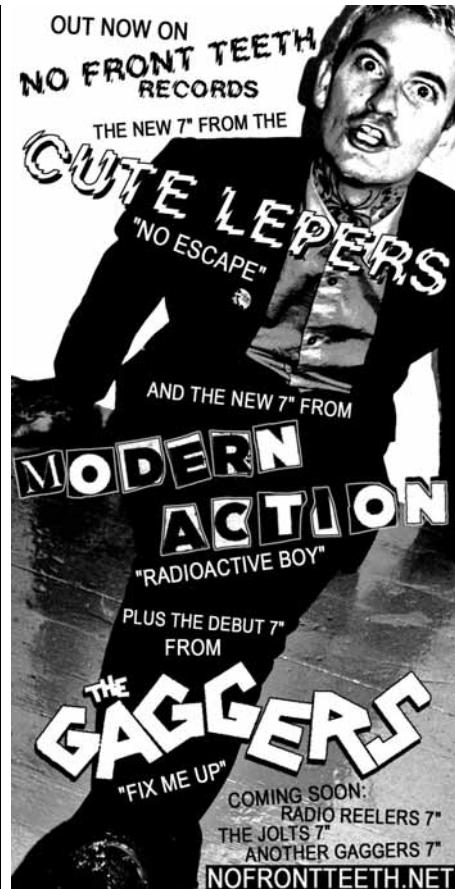
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than it actually sounds. Fully grounded in a rehashed '80s hardcore template with a dash of melody thrown in—think early Paint It Black and Death Is Not Glamorous languorously bathing in a bacteria-laden hot tub with the Descendents—it comes across as more formulaic than anything else. If this band was coming out of some podunk town in the middle of nowhere, I don't think people would be so quick to jump on the bandwagon. But since it's *these* guys... Probably a fun project for those involved, but be wary of the hype, you know? —Keith Rosson (No Idea)

NUX VOMICA: Asleep in the Ashes: CD
I thought this was an EP when I saw that there were only six songs. I was wrong on all fronts. This thing clocks in a bit over an hour or so. But surprisingly enough, it was not a labored effort. It's a genre melting pot of epic storytelling soundscapes. You get everything from crust, black metal, punk, and rock with everything in between. Fast, slow, medium. It runs the gamut for a tonal adventure. The music is not pretty by any means, but it does take you on an adventure of sound. Production-wise, I was surprised by the brightness of the recording. I was expecting more of the dark, bottom-heavy sound. But this has a more open and widespread sound of guitar gushing from the speakers, giving the music a speck of hope. That's not common among many contemporary bands that they may play along with. I saw the band live when they came through my town on tour recently. Hearing these songs live was

eye opening. Also seeing them a few years prior showed that they are a band that definitely has come into their own. —Donofthead (Aborted Society)

OLD GROWTH / 12XU: Split: 7"

We've got a problem here. It's finals at school and I've got limited time to write these reviews, but all I want to do is play this record over and over! Old Growth combine winding guitars, interesting rhythms, and vocal hooks while retaining a punk compactness. Think Jawbox or Unwound at a house show. France's 12XU play silty indie punk with sing-song vocals. They remind me of an old favorite, Garden Variety. Two songs from each band, but I'll be seeking out more. My grades may suffer for it, but damn the torpedoes; it will be worth it. —CT Terry (Bakery Outlet)

ONION FLAVORED RINGS: Funny: 7" EP

Science me this: is there a process or a material that instantly converts light rays into dark voids? Maybe something that turns bubblegum into lumps of coal? Because if one was to listen to solely Onion Flavored Rings' music and the lyrics were indistinguishable, one could make the argument that this 7" is one, big, fuzzy teddy bear that inhales cotton candy and poos glitter puff paint rainbows. Yet, this is not so. The lyrics are bleak, broken, and destructive. Relationships are holocausted left and right and the radiation continues to sicken even distant memories. Just change the color of a condiment and it fundamentally changes. *Funny* is the black tartar sauce of pop

punk and it's Onion Flavored Rings' swan song. OFR are dead. Long live OFR. —Todd (Thrillhouse)

PANGEA: Never Not Know Nothing: 7"

Progressive pop music that hops and flops around in tasty melodies and zany musicianship. Definitely not easy to categorize or even comprehend, just imagine oldies radio as an Abba Zabba. Now imagine Pangea as a pack of wild, fun-loving wombats tearing it to pieces. Stretching it and distorting it into an untamed, savage form. They're the kind of band that easily wins over a crowd, while also being a band that thinks it's a good idea to put a sound clip from a road construction pinball game in between two songs. Three-hundred pressed, so don't think about it for too long. —Daryl (Stress Domain)

sound. It's not always blistering guitar attacks but there aren't any acoustic interludes, either. Pelican hits it right on, balancing the melancholy with the edgy and pulling it off big time. There's no standing back from the album; the riffs are too engaging. The textures and atmosphere give off an almost autumnal feel. There are a number of guest spots on the album with the biggest being Allen Epley of The Life And Times providing vocals on the last track, "Final Breath." It's a first for Pelican, but it sounds beautiful. This album works great as both background music while reading or when you want to rock out. It definitely covers all the bases. There's no doubt this will be in my top five for the year. —Kurt Morris (Southern Lord)

PHANTOM FAMILY HALO / MEAH!: Split: 7"

This is some beautiful packaging. I like the pictures on both sides of the record cover, although they are very different (aside from the color) from one another. It's a great purple color; it's like a DumDum lollipop or (of course) a crayon. Love the insert from Sophomore Lounge Records. It's a real photograph (I think!) of a forest with the sun breaking in a misty shine through the trees, and the color of the light is this mauve/deep pink/purple color; I think it looks nice with the pictures on the front and back covers. There is a list of releases printed out and glued to the back of the photo; it is great, very nice. I also like the band insert, with two different but cool photos on nice, thick cardstock. The record itself is this

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gorgeous baby blue / periwinkle color with nice artwork on the inside circle. All and all, really excellent packaging! On to the music, well the Phantom Family Halo cover of "Hurricane Fighter Plane" I totally love. I actually remember a different cover of this song, done originally by The Red Crayola in 1966, by Alien Sex Fiend, from when I was a wee lass. Needless to say, it sounds completely different than the version done here by Phantom Family Halo, a band from Kentucky. I have never heard the original, but I can hear some '60s in the way the singer from Phantom sings it (by the way, the info about The Red Crayola on Wikipedia is worth checking out, it says: "This is a band that was paid ten dollars to stop a performance in Berkeley. If Berkeley's not having it, you know you're in for rough sledding." Ha!), and I would definitely like to hear the original. This version I really like, it's kinda hypnotic. The singer sounds like he's mellow and very suave, but actually also a little weird and creepy. I found it to be dangerously enticing. There are awesome guitar (or something!) effects in the middle of the song; it sounds like ravenous seagulls swooping around in the dead of night. Favorite line: "Takes me to the sky above, To the clouds of love." Meah!, on the reverse side, I am still undecided about. At first listen, there is a little too much going on. Vocally I can hear Blood Bros., Tom Waits, Black Eyes, and some kind of rap / hip hop style. There's a part in the first song where a child is speaking and I wasn't into that. The second song I liked better.

Easy and nonchalant at first, it later breaks into a more dance punk type of style. Again a lot of Blood Bros. in that one. I wouldn't have minded a more consistent tempo—not that I don't like to mix it up, it's just that sometimes I like to get in a mood. Prominent quirky bass and scratchy guitar. I'll listen to it more. Overall, very excited about this release. —Jennifer Federico (Sophomore Lounge, sophomoreloungerecords.com)

PINK RAZORS: *Leave Alive*: CD

Fun, zippy, revved-up poppy punk, and at nine tracks the record was far too short. I think that this is one of those occasions in which a band's name really does reflect the tunage...Pink Razors are sharp and cutting but there's an element of frivolity and panache at the same time. Well done. —The Lord Kveldulfr (No Idea)

POGO, THE: *Police Story*, 7"

I think, logically, this is what my old band would have sounded like if they kept me on vocals. Hell, even the pictures remind me of my stupid freshman haircut. My only conclusion is that this band is from an alternate universe where I still like street punk. I didn't realize street punk was getting into quantum physics. Just to be clear, if a street punk band were to start singing about science, it would be metric buttloads better than this 7". —Bryan Static (Loud Punk)

POSITIVE NOISE:

2008 Hardcore Punk: Cassette

From the state that gave us Negative

Approach, Michigan punks Positive Noise compiled all of their up-to-date released output onto one convenient cassette. Musically, they're as fierce as they come. Straight-up hardcore with nods to Youth Of Today and R.A.M.B.O. As far as the lyrical content is concerned, so much of it is nothing you haven't already heard before: cries for social, political, and communal activism with concern for the betterment of punks and humanity as a whole. Though, after reading their mission statement and liner notes, I couldn't help but feel being preached to. I eat meat but I don't necessarily feel that it makes me less of a person. If the band's members can get past their hang ups about other people's personal choices I wouldn't doubt that it would be fun seeing them live, and possibly moshing alongside them. —Juan Espinosa (Otherwise Dead)

PSYCHED TO DIE: *Year One*: CD

I'm guilty of an Erg-related bias, for sure. I just expect that anything those three fellows touch will turn to gold, and, really, I've yet to be disappointed. That's no easy feat in Mike Yannich's case, since it seems that he's had a hand in about two hundred or so bands in the past few years, yet his track record remains killer. Psyched To Die, while definitely his biggest departure style-wise from The Ergs (although not *too* far), is no exception: Fast, American-style hardcore with plenty of melodic flourishes and super-memorable choruses. I feel one of the most important aspects when starting a band of this genre is that one

refrains from choosing a particular band to emulate (which is often the case), and while there are certainly hints of some specific bands in these songs, Psyched To Die totally pulls off sounding like their own hardcore band. They also keep things catchy enough that they'll transcend subgenres based on more than just the ex-members list. Really great. —Dave Williams (Dirtnap)

PURPLE HEARTS:

Mod Singles Collection: CD

A musical trip through the band's career via its singles, starting off with Who-gone-punk ditties like "Millions Like Us" and "Frustration" to more traditional '60s-inspired fare like "My Life As a Jigsaw" and "The Guy Who Made Her a Star" and ending with their final single, 1986's "Friends Again." As can be expected, the Captain has tacked on some additional tracks, in this case three songs culled from *The Beat Generation & Angry Young Men* compilation that the band recorded in 1981, one of which co-produced by some dude named Paul Weller. In all, this is a nice introduction to one of the better bands that came out of the UK's '70s mod scene. —Jimmy Alvarado (Captain Oi)

READY THE JET / JAPANESE MONSTERS: *Split*: 7"

I understand that upon first impression Ready The Jet might come off as a little too precious, but, then again, the first time I saw them play was quashed in the middle of a rowdy house party in none other than Lancaster, California. For

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those unfamiliar with the town, Lancaster is known for three things: speed, having a disturbingly large population of KKK members, and affordable housing via Chapter 8. Not that all these elements were visible at the party, but they definitely weren't too far away. Ready The Jet unabashedly play '90s indie rock, but with fifteen plus years of reflection and punk lessons learned. Punk lessons like; knowing the right time of night to pack up and leave a Lancaster house party. These two songs work as a great accompaniment to their *Killing Pace 7"* recently released on Asian Man. Japanese Monsters: if you've ever had a fun time in Phoenix and pop punk was involved, there is a very good chance that one of these dudes was there. A verrrrrrrry good chance. Bitter, angry, pissed off pop punk, and why the fuck not? Fans of OWTH, Copyrights, and Rumspringer should definitely check this out. —Daryl (Split, Self-released)

RIPTIDES, THE:

Tales from Planet Earth: CD

All I have to say is this was worth the wait. Produced by Mass "Magic Touch" Giorgini (I just made that nickname up. It fits), this twelve-song CD will blow the fucking hinges off of any door of your house. You won't even have to crank it to ten, either. Sweet backup vocals, crunchy guitar riffage, and solid songwriting make this a must-have. "Omega Man" is a great song. Then it's followed up by the equally impressive "Dial M for Murder." There's even a Xmas song on here that's almost as

good as "Christmas in Hollis." How can you argue with a record that ends with a song called "Shit Outta Luck"? Buy this now or live out the unbearable prophecy of the last song for the rest of your life. I'm really not kidding you now. —Sean Koepenick (Asian Man)

ROBOTOSAURUS: *Manhater*: 10"

Heavier-than-hell metal that reminds me of bands like Acme, Hewhocorrupts, Morser, and the sort. Abrasive, noisy, chaotic, perplexing time changes, and pummeling riffs. They tend to keep the songs cranked towards the far right of the speedometer. It's though they laid a heavy brick on the gas pedal, saying, "Fuck it. Let's take it over the cliff and bask in the adrenalin rush." Put this record and on and you can't ignore it. It just takes over the room with its massive sound. The guitars are a solid din of distortion, with occasional stabs in the fabric, and the vocals are equally ugly and unsettling. All held in place by the low end. —M.Avr (Vitriol)

ROUGH KIDS: "Why So Serious," "Going Blank" b/w "Can't Stand You": 7" EP

There was a time all the way through the '90s where a band like the Rough Kids wouldn't have to look too far to find a record company that would be in easy alignment with what they're doing. These guys would be a shoo-in for Rip Off, Crypt, or Estrus; all extremely prolific labels, all known for their deep catalogs and great taste. All, now, are out of business or not releasing anything new. So, it's a telling sign that catchy

punk rock with deep rock'n'roll roots is once again on the outside looking in, to the point where it's a DIY affair, recorded and released by the band. (Or maybe they're tired of getting ripped off. Dunno.) I've had the pleasure of seeing them several times in L.A.—and not once with a proper roof over their heads. Well worth seeking out. —Todd (Rough, myspace.com/roughkids)

RVIVR: "Derailer" b/w "Real Mean": 7"

It's hard not to be smitten by RVIVR (pronounced "reviver"). Even if you disregard that all profits from this 7" go towards a bicycle non-profit in Denver, even if you disregard that the lyrics deal with the complexities and nuance of the word "community" in a compelling manner, even if you disregard that Rumbletowne Records—operated by Erika and Matt of RVIVR—has consistently put out great music in crafty packaging, you still have to contend with how flat-out kick-ass the music is. Achy-voiced compassion played with DIY magic. They're one of what I call "Thundercats" bands; it's where each member is excellent on their own, but when all forces combine, they're basically unstoppable. I find myself putting the brakes on from flipping this over more than twice in one sitting. I want it to continue to last in small, powerful sips over a long time. Great stuff. —Todd (Rumbletowne)

SAINTS, THE: *Live in Brisbane 2007*: CD

During the Queensland Music Festival, July 2007 to be exact, The Saints got

back together. I mean the *original* Saints. Well, three out of the four. (Where are you Algy Ward?) Ed Kuepper and Ivor Hay came back to burn it up with Chris Bailey. Twelve songs that sound they never broke up, although the last time they played together was 1978. "This Perfect Day," "Know Your Product," and "Messing with the Kid" really drive the nail into the bloodless heart of some of today's bands output. Save up your pennies. It's a pricey import, but it's well worth it. —Sean Koepenick (Fatal)

SCENE OF ACTION:

20 Minute Hour Glass: CD

Modern rock dreck primed for radio saturation and big buck contracts. —Jimmy Alvarado (Pop Smear)

SCRAMS, THE: Self-titled: 7"

The Scrams hail from Albuquerque, New Mexico and sound like they have a pretty good thing going: Keyboard-driven rock'n'roll that's raw and unrefined, kinda like the first Cococoma and Okmoniks 7"s. The songs don't develop much past their initial inspiration or idea, but there is promise and hope contained in these grooves. Take "Molasses." The Scrams hearken back to the '60s, writing a song about a brand new dance, the Molasses. The lyrics are jokey and the tune doesn't move much past the novelty of a dance based on being lazy in a climate known for extreme heat. But, the guitar riff clearly references the Sonics version of "Have Love Will Travel," and the keyboards dance over the top of

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the melody without drowning it out completely. The band bio says they've only been playing together since 2009, so I'm betting their songwriting will improve vastly over the next few releases. —Josh Benke (Self-released)

SECRET ARMY: *Redemption: 7"*

Four songs of totally solid street punk from a Spanish trio singing in English. Nice-looking packaging with a thick, clearish golden 7" enclosed in a sturdy double sleeve with sweet artwork, to boot. The first song, "Hypocrites and Parasites," starts off very strong with a guitar overture that adds strings before doing an about face into energetic and appealing punk rock fury. The following three songs on the record are also consistently quality material with obvious similarities to better known American counterparts like Rancid and The Forgotten. Without a doubt, the best record I had the pleasure of reviewing for this issue of *Razorcake*. —Jake Shut (Longshot)

SHANG-A-LANG: *Sad Magic*: LP

What a perfect title; this record's both that adjective and that noun in equal measure. Shang-a-Lang's first foray into full-length territory reveals what I've guessed all along: the more songs they write, the better they get, the more I like them. It's knot-in-throat music. I understand that "being real" is a cliché and means as much as "street cred," but S-A-L aren't afraid of looking at the ugly in themselves and their situations. (Perhaps I'm reading too much into

it, knowing that lead singer Chris has a tough job in the social services, yet he helps turn that anxiety into an all-ages space in Las Cruces while running Dirt Cult Records.) But it's these doses of self-doubt and self-depreciation funneling themselves into songs that act as mysterious, inspirational catalysts. (Instead of being total life crushers.) My guess is if the world didn't have so many shit bits flinging up and cracking S-A-L's windshield, there'd be less of a constant catalyst to create music. It's because they just can't stop doing it—it's their antidote, their inoculation and booster shots—which is such a different place to make music from than making it because you don't have anything better to do. (And let's laugh at making music for fame, sex, or money in this review.) For anyone interested in an unadulterated archetype of what DIY punk's up to in the late '00s, drop the needle on *Sad Magic*. —Todd (Fast Crowd)

SHARK PANTS: *Automatic Pinner: 7"EP*

Well, this one's easy. Shark Pants released this one several years back on Underground Government in Japan in support of a tour there, only as a CDEP. And since I'm becoming sort of a jackass in this digital era where I don't consider music one hundred percent real until it's released on vinyl (there hasn't been one instance reported of a record player downloading a virus and you never have to worry if your record player just erased your entire collection in one digital belch), I can now fully

rejoice that this four-song capsule that's a great distillation of Shark Pants. It's a wonderful introduction to these three Tucsonian wizards. Strip Hendrix of any hippie tendencies, feed him a steady diet of nortenos, *Underdog*, and file under complex, not busy. A band that other bands absolutely adore and are mystified by. —Todd (Dirt Cult)

SHOT BAKER / SERF COMBAT: *Chicago vs. London: 7"*

Shot Baker: One original, one cover. Their original is great. If you're not a fan of Shot Baker already, this one isn't going to convert you, though. They cover "England Belongs to Me" which sounds really cool with Tony's voice and I'm still not convinced that the song is as big a deal as some of my friends think it is, but I am now one step closer to admitting that it can be good. Serf Combat: I'm fairly impressed with their original on this record. Folksy indie punk: hints of Lemuria and the Measure [SA], except with a male singing. Really, really good, but the vocals might not be for everyone. —Bryan Static (Home of the Brave/Underground Communiqué)

SICK SICK BIRDS: *Heavy Manners*: LP

I've enjoyed Sick Sick Birds for a while now. This record blows my mind, because it almost sounds *nothing* like them live, but that's not a bad thing. They've always had that "We've done the loudfastrules thing, and it's time to move on" post punk element, but on their full length, it really shows.

Slower and a bit more blueprinted out, bringing to mind bands like Wire, or what the Minutemen would probably be like if they were still around. —Joe Evans III (Toxic Pop)

SIXES: *Self-titled: 7"*

Brutal hardcore with downtuned guitars and surprisingly clear vocals. They swing back and forth between blasting and moshing and do this cool thing where they add slower breakdowns to the end of their mosh parts. I know that sounds like a dumb "Pimp My Ride" joke ("I know you like moshing, so we added mosh parts to your mosh parts so you can mosh while you're moshing"), but they do it well. This is some seriously dirty, gritty, pissed-off music. Four songs, the last one being an introspective dirge with spoken vocals. Put it on and cover your eyes in case the nearest cinderblocks explode. —CT Terry (Our Sound, outsound.net)

SKIMMER: *Smitten: 2 x CD*

This two-CD release is a discography of all of Skimmer's releases from 1993-1998. The first disc consists of six seven-inchers and some demos, while disc two is their *Vexed* LP and a few outtakes. I like Skimmer's poppy, poppy, and yet-still-more poppy punk sound, but at times it got a bit old. But, good stuff when considered as a whole. My biggest problem is, in fact, the whole: because of the sheer mass of the record (fifty-two songs, what a bargain!) the tunes frequently started to run together and everything wound up

The advertisement features a collage of images and text. On the left, a young man with a shaved head and a slight smile is shown from the chest up. Next to him is the text: "Hey! My name is Gnat and I make 1 inch buttons". Below this, large, stylized text reads "DECAYING YOUTH BUTTONS" with a pipe and debris graphic underneath. At the bottom left, promotional text says "Mention 'Razor Turtle' when ordering and get 1 dollar off every 50 buttons! Offer ends march 15th 2010". The website "www.decayingyouth.com" is listed at the bottom left. On the right side, a pair of hands is shown from the wrists up, palms facing each other. Above the hands, the text reads "then I use button money to put out records with these hands". Below the hands is the logo for "USELESS WORLD RECORDS" featuring a stylized figure. To the right of the logo are two smaller images: one of a person falling labeled "THE SOREL TRYING DAYS" and another of a city scene labeled "UW002 - Both". The website "www.uselessworldrecords.com" is listed at the bottom right.

sounding the same with nothing really standing out. I suspect that if I heard Skimmer (this was my first Skimmer-time) in shorter blasts of context such as the individual seven inchers, I'd have a much more positive reaction. Good photos, flyer art, and liner notes on the recording sessions are included, too. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Crackle)

SLEEPIES / OLD TESTAMENT HEROES: Split: Cassette

The packaging for this is pretty all right stuff. It comes in an envelope, like a 6" x 9" manila envelope but black, with a hand-printed graphic. I still haven't been able to figure out what the pic is, but I enjoy looking at it. Inside the envelope is a lyric book that is just a bit smaller than the envelope and a ten-minute white cassette with the band names hand written. I appreciate that these dudes are down enough for their stuff not only to release it themselves, but put a bit of effort into packaging it. Nice. Sleepies: The last thing that Sleepies put out, *Join the Shark*, was an awesome surprise; definitely one of the better EPs that I've heard this year. So I was no doubt stoked to get this cassette that has two new songs. They both seem to be a continuation of the rambunctious indie punk offered on the *Join the Shark* EP (which is only three dollars), but maybe a little moodier. I still want more. Awesome. OTH: I grew up around a few guitar players, but not many drummers or bassists. So I was constantly hearing dudes playing just guitar. It was something that I tolerated, but I never quite understood it

(probably because I play no instruments whatsoever). Over time, I've come to be kinda able to recognize (what I would consider) an okay guitar riff or whatever. This is the drummer from Sleepies doing some solo stuff with an electric guitar doing a concept record in about five minutes. It's about agrarian reform in North Korea through the eyes of somebody with some reverence for Kim Jong-Il's father; judging from the lyric book, it might have come from a library book. The guitar is okay, reminds me of some good, kinda aggressive yet folksy pop punk; but, as I mentioned above, I don't quite understand just electric guitar. —Vincent (Doom Songs, herecomesthesleepies@gmail.com)

SLEEPWALL: *Is That Factual? 7"*

It's unfair to impose *Zen Arcade* on a two-song 7". Two different states of vinyl mass. But much as with Tenement's recent *Ice Pick 7"*, it's hard not to make Hüsker Dü-ian references to another band that is looking far beyond its constraints from the *Land Speed Record* gate. This shit's expansive, layered, tension-filled, and is suited for a double LP to have it wash, glaze, and wander around your ears for awhile. I'll go ahead and mention that some Dinosaur jr. is in the mix. Bug wouldn't be a bad comparison. Funny thing is that Sleepwall's first 7" was much more Deep Wound meets Superchunk; working well as a 7" capsule. I'm super interested how all the pieces are going to come together for a full length. —Todd (Toxic Pop)

SLOW POISONERS, THE: *Magic Casket*: CD

One dude with an exceedingly cool band name at his disposal cranks out eleven tracks of swampy, quirky rock songs about witches, zombies, and humans regressing back into living underwater, among other things. —Jimmy Alvarado (Slow Poisoners)

SPEARS, THE: *Shove*: CD

What do you get when you hand Gary Strickland, vocalist for legendary Florida hardcore band Hated Youth, a bass and stick him in a band with Pink Lincolns vocalist Chris Barrows, Down By Law guitarist Sam Williams and current DRI drummer Rob Rampy? A hardcore album that may not burn with the same intensity as early DRI or Hated Youth, but is still rife with rock solid tunes that occasionally come within sight of Zero Boys-level greatness. —Jimmy Alvarado (Jailhouse)

S.P.I.C.: *Day Drunk*: CD

Pedestrian, punky rock with a singer that sounds like he's actively avoiding singing in tune. Cute acronym for the band name there. —Jimmy Alvarado (Pop-2121)

SPRINGHILL: ...*You Saw Me Laugh, You Saw Me Cry...*: CD

It took me forever to dig up anything about the band due to the lack of any info with the CD besides a Japanese mailing address, but after some searching I found out that they were a German pop punk band in the early to mid '90s. This release is more or less their discography.

These guys are somewhere between Millencolin and Face To Face. There are lots of harmonies, fast punk that dips into the slower, epic emo end of the pool quite often, and accents galore. Some of the lyrics do get a little embarrassingly direct, like the song "That Girl," whose chorus is "there is a girl and I love her." But, for the most part, this is pretty good stuff. The best, no doubt, is the lead-off track "Windmill." This sounds like the best song that never made it onto Face To Face's *Big Choice*, or one of the good Unwritten Law albums. Freaking great gem of a song. —Adrian (SP)

STATIONARY ODYSSEY: *Sons of Boy*: CD

The Good: These cats really know their way around their instruments and have the sense to really mix up styles—ethereal post-rock, blues, and noise are all in evidence. The Bad: There's also a heavy dollop of prog rock here, which really showcases their ability to play on this mostly instrumental release, but after a while gets about as interesting as an ELP album. The Fucking Awesome: Artist John Casey deserves hugs—and lotsa cash—from everyone in the band for the faboo illustrations he gave 'em for this release. —Jimmy Alvarado (Joyful Noise)

STATUSES: "We're Disparate" b/w "To the Top" and "Young Enough": 7" EP

Equal parts Dilbert, The Jam, and Allan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*. You could say that it's geeky (check), you could say that they're bouncy and non-ass power pop with sharp punk

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teeth in their chainsaw (check), and you could say they're working class without the nutty boots, birds, braces, dual, fat-fingered patriotism (check). Rural Canadian spectacle rock is a go. Haven't heard one bad song from this trio yet. —Todd (House Party / P.Trash)

STORM OF STRESS: Self-titled: CD-R

Storm Of Stress play angry speed metal with pedantic lyrics about refusing to help friends who can't help themselves. "Nut Up," "Leech," and "Waste" are gleaming examples of the self-righteous attitude in hardcore/speed metal that sends me lunging towards the "stop" button on the CD player. To these guys' credit, they do acknowledge their own fallibility in "Slipping into Darkness" and "Let Down," mentioning vague failures and wishing for real-life do-overs. The music is played fast and tightly with a few decent breakdowns and the singer is appropriately indecipherable in his overblown, unholy delivery. The dude could've sung in Polish and I wouldn't have known the difference save for the lyric sheet printed in the liner notes. One suggestion, SOS: If your lyrics and message are important enough to print out for people to read, it's a good idea to proof read them and correct the spelling errors. —Josh Benke (Self-released)

STRENGTH APPROACH: All the Plans We Made Are Going to Fail: CD

Italian hardcore from Rome. This record is over a year old, but I'm really digging it. There are riffs that wouldn't be out of place on an S.O.D. record from the

mid-'80s, but it doesn't feel dated or rehashed. Granted, it's not the most original material, but it's a lot of fun to listen to. There's something to be said for getting older and refusing to slow the fuck down. —Jim Ruland (Pee)

STRESSED OUT / RIP IT UP: Split: 7"

Look, I know you don't care what I have to say about the music. All you want to know is which *Arrested Development* character they thanked on the liner notes. The answer is Tobias. If you like good hardcore punk bands who watch great comedy television programs, you can't go wrong with Rip It Up. Stressed Out thanks a lot of people I've never heard of. Obviously, they are lesser human beings for not thanking a fictional character. B+. I still don't trust download codes though. —Bryan Static (Self-released)

STRUCK BY LIGHTENING: Serpents: CD

Whoa-ho-ho-ho! I've sat in this room for the past couple nights listening to this disc in total awe. There's a definite Tragedy influence in their sound. But Struck By Lightening are most definitely on their own trip. They're waaayyyyyyy heavier, darker, and the metal influences propel them above the mindless masses attempting the same sound. Drumming that sounds like large machine guns going off. The way they are recorded is perfect. I haven't heard any drums anywhere recorded this well. You can hear and pret' near feel every hit. The bass has a great and dirty sound that gives the songs a sinister edge, and the guitars are one sheer din of energy. The vocals are great as

well. Nothing overdone or overdramatic. Strong, effective, and intelligible. This is one of those albums you can immerse yourself in. The songs are solid as hell, the time changes dynamic, and, as the album progresses, so do the songs—from semi speedy tempos and to sludge. The instrumental, "Collection of Teeth" with its cold tones and piano is a great break from the guitars and drums assault. It underlines the overall feel of the album. Also, it sounds like it could easily fit into a soundtrack for a Fulci film. Feel the darkness and wallow in it. Easily one of the best heavy bands out there at the moment, and I will stand behind that statement. —M.Avg (Translation Loss, translationloss.com)

SUNDOWNERS: Gnome & Glacier: LP

Surprisingly, this is the first time this band found its way onto my turntable. That's too bad, 'cause this is right up my alley. Scrappy, DIY pop punk that's obviously unorthodox, but in ways that aren't instantly obvious. Oddball, but still very familiar. Like Tulsa with a little more meat on the bones, or Off With Their Heads with less of a bone to pick. Sundowners put the spring in Springfield and will fulfill your need for a solid, well-rounded album. On 45 and the grooves go all the way in! —Daryl (Dirt Cult)

SWORN LIARS, THE: Vile Device: CD

Goddamn, do I hate the way CDs sound, everything so crisp and bright. Makes me want to head to the nearest pig farm, throw the Sworn Liars CD in the mud, and let the hogs root around

with it for an afternoon. "Vile Device" comes off sounding pretty darn generic and I attribute most of that to the overly clean production. A song like "Tired of You," with its outer space keyboard intro and wall'o'sound guitars, would sound a helluva lot better with some greasy globs of booger snot in the mix. Same goes for "Krank." These guys are all over the place musically, with a couple cool satanic horror punk songs, some Circle Jerks hardcore ("Every Body"), and some bizzaro countrified rawk ("Kill Me," "Foul Thing"). The songs aren't bad, but it's all a little too scrubbed-behind-the-ears sounding for me. —Josh Benke (Big Neck)

TEENAGE BOTTLEROCKET: They Came from the Shadows: CD

Let me say right away, without hesitation, that Teenage Bottlerocket needs to receive a Punk Achievement award because they're about seventy-five percent responsible for the resurgence of pop punk (which, in turn, has made my life about thirty-seven percent better) and they feature members of the Lillingtons, one of the best pop punk bands of all time! Plus, they might've set a record for the most "oh, oh, ohs" in pop punk history and I mean this in the best possible way. Let me put it this way. Every year, my boyfriend organizes a punk rock dance party on Valentine's Day. I consider it the premier social event of the year, every year. And for two years running, at the end of the dance party, once everyone has left except the true believers, we put on Teenage

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Bottlerocket and dance like crazy! So, having said that, this is their worst record, but in saying this, you have to realize that they have the bar extremely high, being that they are Olympic high jumpers. This starts out with an amazing, soon-to-be classic "Skate or Die," which contains everything you'd ever want out of a Teenage Bottlerocket song: ridiculous lyrics, ("So shut up, get rad 'cause now it's time to skate or die.") unbelievably catchy guitar solos, and the appropriately extreme level of Ramones worship. Here's the problem. This album does have some truly great songs, but it also has a few that sound like they're a Fat Wreck Chords band. Now, I know what you're thinking. They *are* a Fat Wreck Chords band. True enough, but I had considered their relationship to that label as roughly equivalent to The Strike's relationship to Victory Records (who released their second LP). Sadly, I fear that the musical influence of Fat Wreck Chords is rubbing off, as demonstrated by a few songs that could best be described as boring, generic punk songs. Argh. I'll still listen to half of these songs over and over again, but I think I'll have to create a mix tape that weeds out the other half. If this were a cereal, it'd be a double-pack of Cinnamon Toast Crunch (yum!) and regular Cheerios (yawn). —Maddy (Fat Wreck Chords)

TEENAGE REHAB: Let's Be Enemies: CD
This is the hottest shit to come out of Kentucky since Wild Turkey! (I haven't drank that stuff in years but I remember

it burns.) Produced by Joe Queer, this careens along like a drunk dog on a hardwood floor (don't ever try this at home kids.) "Sunday Night Blackout" blasts through at the start of this one, and, really, don't we all wish we could be hung over on a Monday morning? The boys kick it into high gear for "She Can't Fuck Me" with a white hot ten second guitar solo tossed in for good measure. "Sick of Your Face" will also be a new crowd pleaser with the punters. Solid stuff, gentlemen. —Sean Koepenick (Jailhouse)

THIS RUNS ON BLOOD / TRANSIENT: Split: EP

Unfuckin' real how horrible This Runs On Blood is. Think of the Blood Brothers meets An Albatross, and make them even more pretentious. This Runs On Blood are screamo crap with a lot of wanking going on in the studio with effects and samples for dramatic effect. The screaming vocals are atrocious. I guess the singer's throwing some little shit fit I should be interested in, but ehhh.... Transient are run-of-the-mill modern day grind. I prefer them over This Runs On Blood, but, at the same time, they're nothing special, and certainly not worth forking over your entertainment dollars in these less-than-free-wheeling times. The one positive about this record is the excellent packaging: offset three-color cover, sewn pocket for the blue vinyl, and nice hand lettering throughout. —M.Avg (End Theory, endtheoryrecords@gmail.com)

TODD CONGELIERE / JACOB HAMILTON: Split: Cassette

Todd: I've enjoyed the Cong's eclectic output over the years—the snotty FYP, the more focused Toys That Kill, the weird party jams of URTC, so I'm not surprised I like this "solo" material (I picked this up just before seeing a solo set, where he was accompanied by music-life-mates Jimmy and Chachi). It's acoustic-backed with assorted drums, melodica, and a few other odd instruments. I feel that if they were going to remake one of the *Twilight Zone* episodes that takes place in a small town with a little weirdness, this would be the perfect soundtrack, and I love the *Twilight Zone*. Jacob: Conversely, never heard of the fellow. Seems to go back and forth between echo- and reverberated acoustic, to full band stuff, most of which sounds like it would belong on Plan-It-X, before it had really established itself. —Joe Evans III (People's Republic Of Rock And Roll)

TOUGH SHITS: Pretty Wild b/w Why You Gotta Roam: 7"

Funny, this band doesn't really come off being particularly tough at all. Instead, they put out a record with two country songs, the a-side a bit rock'n'roll, and the b-side a little mellow, until it kicks in at the end. I dig it. —Joe Evans III (Ramo)

TV WATCHERS, THE: Carl in the Sky with Diamonds, Split CD: 7"

Shrouded in mystery from the get-go. The hand-drawn sleeve and 7" labels do not match up at all. The actual songs—and yeah, that's a term used reasonably

loosely—are apparently penned and performed by two dudes named "Poopy" and "Food." The songs are pretty much a sampling of random keyboard bleeps and odd drum bleeps while a guy flatly intones random gibberish about Hollywood ("I get to watch Jessica Simpson / be Daisy Duke/ sweet / the plots are really dynamite") and science (Intelligent design / use your mind / science is lame / don't listen to it / Jesus will win / science will die." Definitely hits the "so bad it's good" button, but probably won't get too many repeated listens. What it *really* sounds like is when kids get their first four track recorders (which I guess is, what, ProTools these days?) and are just learning to fuck around with them. But a bit of internet research indicates that either "Poopy" or "Food" of the TV Watchers may actually be a member of '90s weirdness/noise act Sockeye, and then things actually start to make a little more sense. Like I said, the whole thing is a little juvenile, pretty silly, and totally shrouded in weirdness. Which is probably just the way they want it. —Keith Rosson (My Mind's Eye)

UZI RASH GROUP BAND, THE: High and Free: LP

I'm really liking this stuff. I don't know how to quite explain it. It's not like anyone has come up with some catch-all label to put bands like this under. Which is a nice thing. Keeps being co-opted much harder. If you like bands like Swell Maps, Sic Alps, and Dan Melchior, then you need to listen to the Uzi Rash Group Band. Lo-fi art post punk garage damage



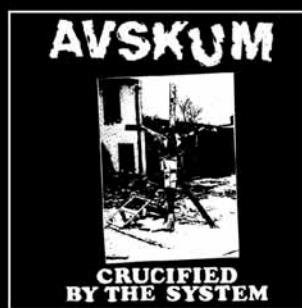
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and some other things. The songs shuffle and meander, sometimes they linger. Instruments make clanging sounds, the guitars are tinny sounding, the drums are crunchy without being loud, and the vocals sound like they're coming from another room. "Bag of Dirt" is instantly memorable. "End Times," which closes the record, is a slight bit different than the rest of the tracks, from the vocals to the overall tone. A little darker and slightly more bent than the rest. The others tend to reveal themselves with each subsequent listen. -M.Avg (Freedom School, myspace.com/freedomschoolrecords)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Dangerous Intersections IV:7"

When did pop punk get so damn wordy? This four band comp features a bunch of songs that ramble on and on, with one exception. Thank you, Strait A's, for writing lyrics and not essays. Thank you for "Fuck you, you're an idiot and I don't even like you anymore." No thank you to Like Bats for "I want you to feel that pain deep in your chest like something's buried deep underneath your skin, and it'll throb every now and again, reminding you of what could have been." And that's just one line. There are about 327 more of them where that came from. Actually, that's not too bad. It's just fucking exhausting. I prefer my pop punk to hit me fast and hard, to make me smile and then to get out of my way so can listen to a metal band sing about Vikings or some shit. Straight A's: mission accomplished. -MP Johnson (Traffic Street)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:

Lost Souls Volume 2: CD

Who knew so much quality fuzz came out of Arkansas in the late '60s? *Lost Souls* is a series dedicated to archiving psych and garage singles from the Deep South. *Volume Two* comes on as strong as the first one. The Modds "Leave My House" is a Teenage Shutdown quality rocker and the range of music stretches to bass-heavy psych. Loads of good stuff from early Arkansas. In the arena of regional archives, this crosses the border. There is a lot of variety here and you don't have to be from Arkansas to dig it. -Billups Allen (Psych Of The South, psychofthesouth.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *No T.O.:12"*

Somehow forgot to review this a few issues ago and then my turntable takes a dump after twenty-five years. All I got to do was stare at this record and wished I could play the damn thing. Rolled some quarters, went to the bank, and I scored a used turntable on Craigslist. First up! This comp! This is a remake of the famous *Yes LA* comp from 1979 but Toronto style. Songs are played track for track as the original. Replicating the original, the record is also one-sided with a silkscreen on the B-side. Tackling the songs: Stef And The Studs do the Bags and Alleycats, Career Suicide handle the Eyes, The Brown Knuckler takes care of the Black Randy track, the Dangerloves do a great X, and to close it off, Legion 666 put the heavy on the Germs. Limited to

300, so go jump on it! Now I have to go see if my brother has an original to hear what that actually sounds like. -Donothedead (Schizophrenic)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Punkfest 2009: CD*

Obligatory full disclosure blahblahblah: Not only is one of the persons responsible for this comp, specifically the Right Wrong Rev. Paul Putrid, a buddy of mine, one of my old bands also contributed a track. Now that we have that out of the way, lemme say it's no secret that underneath them gruff exteriors, the average old punker is about as soft-hearted as a melted Three Musketeers bar when it comes to kids, so every year Paul (a vocalist whose crazed live antics are the stuff of legend) and some buddies put on a benefit show and release a compilation to benefit the Detroit Children's Hospital. The disc currently under discussion is the benefit comp for 2009. Before you start groaning and lamenting about how these comps usually suck and are full of wimpy poseur bands passing off their crappiest tunes to beef up their résumés, lemme give you an in-order rundown of who's providing the tuneage here: The Nihilistics, Retching Red, The Offenders, Cretin Grims, White Rose, Guerilla Wrench, Kent State, Pork Dukes, Tumors, Noisecult, Satan's Toilet, Into the Void, The Repressed, and Filth Eater. Those with more than a passing knowledge of punk/hardcore history will recognize more than a few of those names. Further, while the sound quality may occasionally

vary from track to track, not a single tune on here is a throwaway, meaning this is prime fodder for cranking loud enough to annoy neighbors three cities away. Besides, the ten bucks you plunk down is going to a good cause. Oh, and keep an eye out for next year's comp, 'cause as implausible as it seems, word on the street is it's gonna be even better and will include some seriously heavy hitters. -Jimmy Alvarado (Punkfest)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *The State I'm In: CD*

Well, no matter what you may think of the music, Crafty Records should get a gold star and a piece of candy for the packaging alone: *The State I'm In* comes in a license plate sleeve. Yep, the CD's actually packaged in half of a Missouri license plate. Goddamn. As far as the actual album, it's a nice mix of acoustic and low-intensity electric numbers. Folks like Wingnut Dishwashers Union, Mischief Brew, The Sweet Ones, and Chris Clavin all make appearances, and while it may seem a little thin on content with only eleven songs, they're all pretty solid tracks. Sure, The Stick Martin Show's "The Tail of Captain McNail" sounds suspiciously like Billy Joel's "Piano Man," but c'mon... it's packaged in a fucking license plate.

-Keith Rosson (Crafty)

WHISKEY TRENCH: *Television: LP*

I have been waiting for this record for years. Not a record like this—I mean specifically a Whiskey Trench full-length record. I was worried that this band would fall into obscurity before

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releasing a wax testament to their greatness, and, thankfully, that's not the case. Borrowing equally from the late '80s/early '90s "Gilman sound" and the Asexuals/Nils/Doughboys sound from the band's hometown of Montreal, Whiskey Trench have been working toward this point for so long, and this LP absolutely does that work justice. Incredible songs, very cool production, heartfelt lyrics, and even a killer, die-cut sleeve. I know that the frequency with which Crimpshrine or Fifteen appear in reviews will render these comparisons somewhat annoying and arouse some suspicion as to their validity, but I assure you that in this case they're accurate. Hell, throw in some Sweet Baby, Cringer, Green Day, Hi-Fives, early MTX, etc. and you'll be well on track. Of all of the bands who are shooting for this sound, I think Whiskey Trench have captured that spirit most accurately and sincerely. These songs are just oozing that desperate, youthful-but-not-childish passion that generated the magic that has always surrounded their predecessors. Well worth the wait. Great job, boys. —Dave Williams (Kiss Of Death)

WHITE LOAD: Self-titled: one-sided 7"

The sparse packaging of this 7" was the first thing that caught my eye: photocopied (or computer-printed) cover and dust sleeve. Then I took note of the staples adhering the inner dust sleeve to cover, which were preventing me from slipping the disc out. Definite

points for the sparse packaging, but a slight deduction for the staples. That angered me a bit, but what I felt pales in comparison to what they had pent up to put on this slab. As I sometimes do, I played this at the wrong speed (33 1/3 instead of 45 this time) for a bit before realizing that this wasn't rad hardcore just slowed down. It turns out that this is rad hardcore played pretty fast. It also turns out that White Load is constituted of just three dudes: one on drums, one on guitar, another on vocals, and nobody on bass; and there doesn't need to be. The vocals are low in the mix, but, faint as they are, you can still hear dude's overwrought screams fill the record with his frustration. Combine that with frenzy of the guitar and the pounding of the drums, and you've got yourself some one hell of a record. This whole thing sounds like it was born out of boredom and frustration, two killer ingredients for good hardcore punk. I didn't get a lyric sheet, but I'm sure that they aren't singing about sunshine and smiles. One of the three songs is called "No Exit," which I am betting is a Sartre reference. And if you're referencing *No Exit*, then I doubt your life is all thumbs up and good times. Totally recommended, especially for those who want some frantic shit.

—Vincent (Leather Bar)

WIZZARD SLEEVE:

***Make the World Go Away*: LP**

One of those bands I hear and instantly wonder, Where have they been all my life?! A band that has "Today we

harvest your brains" in their lyrics is a band worth listening to. Wizzard Sleeve, from Alabama, sound like some lost band from the early punks days of L.A. and S.F. Imagine the Screamers, Catholic Discipline, Chrome, and a little bit of early Tuxedo Moon mixed together into one toxic mass. Synthesizers that bury a distorted and crackly guitar, bass lines that snake around, and percussion that keeps the whole circus in line. The music is ultimately dark, but there are pop sensibilities and garage rock elements blended in with a post punk sound. The whole album is great, but the songs that really grab are "No Mongo," "Alabama's Doomed," "Pterodactyl Meltdown," "High Bugs," and the beautifully mangle "When I Die" from the Pagans. This is the sort of record I can listen to over and over for days. —M.Avg (HoZac, hozacrecords.com)

WOMBELS: *Wompologetic Adventures*: CD

I know fuckall about these guys, but so far as I'm able to glean from what little information is here, it looks as if the Wombels are a German band on the verge of celebrating their twenty-fifth anniversary. This is a collection of tunes spanning the breadth of their existence, though the lion's share of tracks here date from the '90s. There are definite hardcore tendencies in evidence to complement the pop punk they deal mostly in, though it must be said that is meant in the '80s sense more than the modern connotation, meaning they sound closer to the Hard-

Ons and Hostages Of Ayatollah than Blink-182 and crap like that. Some really, really good tunes are crammed onto this disc, enough so that I'm flummoxed as to why I haven't come across them sooner. Then again, for all I know they're fuggin' millionaire international stars and I'm the only dweeb on the planet who ain't in the know. If the latter, they deserve it. —Jimmy Alvarado (sp-records.com)

ZOO PARTY: *Re-Fuse*: CD

New records featuring work, especially guest work, by old punk luminaries can be dicey propositions. Too often the luminaries in question have long moved past their former punk personas and any attempts to reconnect come off as either trading in their name for a quick payday or a textbook case of what happens when you forget what you were about. This is not the case here. Zoo Party is a Swedish band that delivers rock-solid tunes heavily influenced by the first wave of U.K. punk bands. While the lyrics aren't exactly Thoreau, the tunes are catchy and well delivered. Best of all, the old punk luminaries guesting here—The Damned's Brian James and Sex Pistol Glen Matlock—actually add, rather than detract, heft to the proceedings. Gotta say, this is one of the better releases in this style I've heard in a while. —Jimmy Alvarado (Acme)

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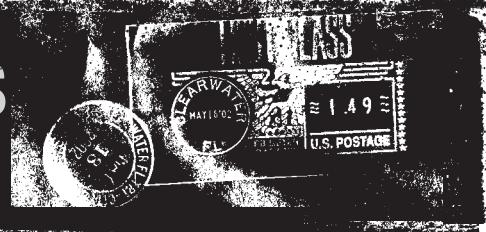
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AVOW #23, \$2, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2",
printed, 48 pgs.

Evidently, our own Keith Rosson is one fine zine writer. I think somewhere in the back of my mind I knew he did a zine, but I didn't really know it was this good. Evidently, not all *Razorcake* contributors who also do zines aim for the low zine quality like yours truly. Unlike the previous issues of *Avow*, this issue is entirely short fictional stories, four in all. I enjoyed the first three but thought the last one dragged a little. Nonetheless, they were engaging and well written. I especially enjoyed "Do It for Hannah" with its tales of black market cat purchases. This is definitely worth your two bucks and makes for good reading on the toilet, bus, or train. —Kurt Morris (Keith Rosson, 2634 SE Morrison, Portland, OR 97214)

BIG HANDS, #7, \$2,
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 36 pgs.

The last issue I read of *Big Hands* was number two. At the time, I remember being impressed with Aaron's writing; few zines are far enough along in realizing their potential at that point in their chronology. Issue two spun tales of which only a few were loosely connected (by the framework of a band tour). Number seven is neatly divided into related chapters within two distinct parts: book one, music, and book two, death. There's something about zines rooted in the southern states that always hooks me. A yearning, soulful, timeless tone seems to permeate the text. Perhaps I feel this connection because of my time spent living in the South, or maybe it's because it resonates with my personality. Regardless, Aaron's prose flows rich and deep, making this zine more than worth your two bucks. —Sean Stewart (Aaron Lake Smith, 1104 Imperial Rd., Cary, NC 27511, oldwaysways.com)

BRAIN LAPSE #1, \$11.99 ppd.,
8 1/2" x 11", printed, 84 pgs.
Wow, this is incredible! Full color,
beautiful, *Ugly Things*-style magazine,
only this is obsessed with power pop

instead of garage music. It features a Marbles centerfold and reviews many singles and albums released thirty years ago or more. It is such a cool concept to review things that are noteworthy—even though they are not new releases—a very refreshing thing to see in a print magazine. This is very much a *fanzine*, despite being professionally printed and glossy. The knowledge and love put into the content is truly astounding. There are interviews with The Equals, Marbles, Orbitz, and a massive article on Titan! Records are sprawled throughout the latter half of the mag. There is all of this, plus an article on (an unknown to me) Japanese band Carol with scans of amazing-looking singles and albums. Don't be scared off by the higher cost; this is like purchasing a book. If you are a fan of power pop and bubblegum, this could not come with a higher recommendation. —Mike Frame (Brain Lapse, PO Box 580491, Minneapolis, MN 55458-0491).

BRAINSCAN, #23, \$?,
4 1/4" x 7", copied, 38 pgs.

Alex had a rough year. She'd been saving up money to reprint *Stolen Sharpie Revolution*, her excellent guide to zine-making, when some urgent home repairs reared their ugly head and decimated her savings. As with past issues I've read of *Brainscan*, this is full of interesting stories plucked from both the deep past and the more recent years of Alex's life. There's a loose theme of travel running through this issue, although the stories touch on much more than that: early romance, importance of music, and gender issues, among others. Recommended. —Sean Stewart (Brainscan Zine, PO Box 17230, Portland, OR 97217-0230, alex@smallworldbuttons.com)

CARROTS AND CONDOMS #2,
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, 28 pgs.
Coco's zine is about navigation. That's the only way I feel I can accurately describe it. It's open and full of a young, wide-eyed view of the world and the beauty of it. At the same time, it's tempered by horror and the scars of



"Life isn't all drunken stargazing and warm socks, and it isn't all colostomy bags and mortal genetic fluctuations either."

—Andrew Flanagan, *SICK*

someone who has lived through, what can only be put bluntly, a rough life. It's about navigation because that's what she does in every piece in here. She sees and attempts to move through the wonder of life while dealing with some really heavy things, beginning with observing the oppression around her in the world. This is followed by abuse in her past and caring for mental illness in her family. She does these things because she *has* to. What comes out of each piece builds into a larger whole, which is a picture of a very strong, young woman who navigates around despair and denial to face the world. She finds her peace and joy through sheer force. —Craven Rock (PO Box 163327, Sacramento, CA 95816, quotthecat@riseup.net)

COMETBUS #53, \$3,
5" x 8", printed, 60 pgs.

Like many other people, I was kinda bummed out by *Cometbus* #52. It just lacked the heart and captivation I usually associate with the zine. That's why I was so stoked when #53 was actually really good. The content in this issue is split between Aaron and longtime contributor, Maddalena Polletta. While Polletta's pieces were a little off-putting at first, I found by reading all of *Cometbus'* work first and then going back and reading her contributions, that made it work more fluidly than the back-and-forth the page order dictates. Aaron's pieces are a healthy mix of stuff with the best being fourteen stories relating to the dearly departed band, Bent Outta Shape, and the longest being the John Holstrom (of *Punk*) article. The latter was originally printed in last April's *Maximumrocknroll*. Polletta's pieces are usually pretty depressing, but always well-written in that gloomy, timeless East Coast style. Worth it alone for newest addition to "Kevin Stories." —Daryl (PO Box 4726, Berkeley, CA 94704)

GEVENA 13 #9, \$2,
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 60 pgs.
Geneva 13 does what so few self-professed "local" zines (or

periodicals) do: It embraces its own geography while still being inclusive to outsiders. It looks at the big picture while giving concrete examples and a working, physical template to draw from. To do all that while also being *topical* and *specific* is a whole other thing entirely. The fact that *Geneva 13* manages that as well is flat-out nuts. This issue's topic is garbage, literally. With two major landfills within a thirteen-mile radius of the town of Geneva, NY, it's a matter of major interest to the zine's editors and contributors. The great thing is, they tackle the complex issue of waste disposal—and all of its many intricacies and difficulties—with intelligence and an expectation of intelligence from the reader. I'm not sure how many people will get this reference, but as far as an actual zine goes, I haven't seen something this well done from such a solid personal-as-political platform since Theo Witsell's *Spectacle* in the early '90s. *Geneva 13* serves as a solid, physical artifact of responsible, community-based journalism. By and for the people, right? It's one of those zines that you read and wish it came as a freebie with the local paper so people outside the zine-nerd community could get exposed to it. Despite the supposedly unappealing subject matter this time around, this one's absolutely inspiring. —Keith Rosson (*Geneva 13* Press, PO Box 13, Geneva, NY 14456)

GIVE ME A DOLLAR! \$3,
5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied,
screened cover, 60 pgs.

First of all, let me say Robnoxious is a great zine writer, and I mean *zine* writer when I say this. His grace and talent is perfect within a medium that doesn't ask permission or take shots. The issue starts out with him doing a bunch of cool stuff like squatting a boat on the frozen Mississippi during a Minnesota winter and hanging out with punks all over the country and traveling. But there's an ebb and flow to it. It's never gross Crimethinc boasting, just a guy writing about his life, which becomes

more apparent when he's struggling to find a job and make rent in the later pages. He's political, but observant and thoughtful, so he manages to fit his struggle into the larger context. It is this thoughtfulness that makes his writing important. His desperation to find work and the degrading things that he has to do to get by is representational of the larger country and civilization he struggles to cope in. He writes from a personal standpoint about struggle, for instance, having to come up with a few hundred dollars rent when he has no income or job. But it's his broad, non-shoegazing way of relating it to what is wrong with society that

part of it. *Ilse Content* always has a lot of effort put into the visual aspect of it, through found items, photographs, and clippings from old books. The visual aspect is not secondary; it's inseparable from the text. Definitely one of the best reads of the year. If you pick this up from her distro, pick up issue #5 too. That's my favorite. —Craven Rock (msvaleriepark.blogspot.com)

LET THE SAVAGERY COMMENCE

62 pgs., 5 1/2" x 8 1/2",
photocopied, color cover
Man, this one took me all over the place. On first glance, it appears to be really fucking cheesy and, in

Walt Whitman when I say, "Who touches this touches a man." —Craven Rock (Black Hoody Nation, 1534 E. 26th St., Minneapolis, MN 55404, diamond666@hotmail.com)

MARGIN MOUTH #7,

5 1/2" x 4 1/2", photocopied
This is a collection of Daryl Gussin's favorite 7" record reviews of 2009, most, if not all, of which have already been printed in this magazine. What makes this zine rad is its size (pocket) and the cool layouts he does, which aren't featured in *Razorcake*. —Rene Navarro (5676 York Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90042)

obtained access to a college special collections library and researched a bunch of these old fanzines to get the scoop. He's precocious and pretty damn opinionated, which makes for an even more interesting read. He talks about how he's always appreciated the zine because it's a disposable medium and poses these '30s fanzines as an archaic example. I disagree with this and find it kind of offensive, but nonetheless, he does have a point. He also brings up some of the lingo in these fanzines and how it is so full of in-jokes—stuff lost to time and obsolescence that it makes no sense—but then he compares that

"Geneva 13 serves as a solid, physical artifact of responsible, community-based journalism. By and for the people, right?"

—Keith Rosson *GEVENA 13* #9

makes us connect with it. Everything in society seems to be there to make you feel like shit, for being who you are, the events that made you who you are and what you're going through. The literary world is backing this up with the bullshit, petty-ass memoir writers (or as I call them, the Sedari) and their cute little stories of happy childhoods and quitting smoking tomes. Robnoxious goes against that by writing in the way that he does. He's down here with the rest of us. *Give Me a Dollar* is essential reading. —Craven Rock (1771 11th St., Oakland, CA 94607, robtearl@gmail.com)

ILSE CONTENT #8, 30 pgs., 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", photocopied, color cover *Ilse Content* is one of my favorite zines. I think I've read just about all of them over the years. Each one is very different, but there tends to be some themes that Alexis comes back to. One of the core themes is that of coping, finding a way to keep yourself alive and maintaining in a fucked up world. It's about focusing on small pleasures and counting blessings. Alexis has an uncanny ability to write about things like nature, relationships, family, and even spirituality, without coming across as sentimental or wholesome. (Although, she probably wouldn't have a problem with her work being called wholesome.) There's enough damage and pain in the back of her words to assure you that it's not just coming from a place of blind blissfulness. It's thoughtful, aware, and respectful of the reader, unlike a lot of the shit-eating, hand-holding, posh-crap that seems to be so common in zines now and "the DIY community" in general. It allows for sadness and strives for small redemptions. The layout is also a huge

many ways, it stays that way. It's a chapbook of crusty metalhead poetry. No, not just poetry by a metalhead, it's *metal poetry*. This is constantly reiterated, for example: "friday night and I have returned/Sweat on my brow from biking over the viaduct/ my Inepsy shirt clings like spandex to my back/Bullet belt slung at a crazy angle over my ass." At first, I found it to be really goofy, even silly, but it was still compulsively readable. Cheesy as it was, it was totally sincere. I started out not being able to take it seriously, but as it went on, I found it to be endearing and painfully honest. He writes about his love of metal, women, and radical politics and the way that he's constantly let down by all of them, but remains a true believer. This is really kind of nice. Even when he falls into the beer, broken heart, and bad sex clichés, there's something compelling about it. I went from thinking, "Is this guy for real?" to thinking "Woah, this guy *is* for real," to, "Man, I bet this dude would be fun to hang out with," to, "Man, this guy is a pretty damn good writer." The very reasons that I found it at first laughable—the constant metal and punk affiliation, the Bukowski idolizing, etc.—later came around to reaffirm this author's worth. He's true and honest and bares all. I started to realize that if metal means that much to him, then to reel it in would be self-censorship and his inability to censor himself eventually reveals a complex and intense soul. He's a radical anarchist, a hopeless romantic, a sex-crazed feminist, and an angry blue collar worker. The rest you'll have to read yourself. While Doug might consider himself in the Bukowski camp, I have to quote

MENTALLY ILL #2, \$1 U.S./Can./Mex., \$2 world or trade, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", 12 pgs., photocopied

This is a dark series of one-page comics, which the artist uses as therapy. The author throws his internal dissonance onto each page in a sort of stream-of-consciousness style. These comics are his way of working out his issues with being depressed, suicidal, and an abuse survivor. He's a new father, as well, and he's under a whole lot of pressure. There's not a lot of light in here, except for the fact that, in spite of it all, he continues to struggle on. He doesn't have any answers. He just presents us with what he's struggling with. Good, but a little short at twelve pages. —Craven Rock (PO Box 1568, NY, NY 10276, redguard@gmail.com)

MY TIME ANNIHILATOR: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE 1930S SCIENCE FICTION FANZINE

30 pgs., 5 1/2" x 6", \$1 plus two stamps or trade, photocopied
This is a lesson on the history of zines. It's not all-encompassing. Instead, it focuses on one of its earliest incarnations, the science fiction fanzine. If you are into zines and don't know this part of the culture's history, it's essential reading. If not, well, it's still pretty important because the context in which this young zinemaker found out about these fanzines is unbelievable in its serendipity. While rooting around in a Philly public library basement, he found a weathered old volume, which turned out to be an index of these fanzines. This illuminated and fascinated him. With a student ID that wasn't his own, this intrigued young punk then

language to that of punk zines of the nineties and how ludicrous that lingo would be to an outsider fifty or sixty years later. He uses this quote from an old *MRR* as an example, "have a crucial youth crew sesh and get a riot grrrl 'zine from the distro." Great, well-researched zine. Not to be missed, so get it before Chris decides it's disposable and quits printing it. —Craven Rock (Chris, 553 Mud Splash Rd., Glendale, KY 42740, shakes@riseup.net)

NEVER KNEEL, \$2, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", 36 pgs.

Never Kneel has a clear purpose from its first sentence: It is about the author Seth Graham's "experience with losing god." And there you have it. Graham's account seems a sincere attempt to describe to the reader how and why he became areligious. Notably, at no point does Graham describe himself as an atheist, and he does describe the zine as "anti-every god," which subtly implies (how purposefully I'm not sure) that while Graham may admit the existence of God, he won't simply follow God. Taken as a whole, Graham's account is very much in line with humanistic philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but presented within a personal idiom. I think James Madison might be proud some people are still willing to think in such ways. There are some limitations to the ideas herein, however. Graham's argues that, as humans, we need to take responsibility for ourselves and our actions, highlight the self rather than a deity, and maintain close contact and harmonious existence with nature. I agree entirely, but Graham's depiction of how religion subverts these ideas is rather one-sided and



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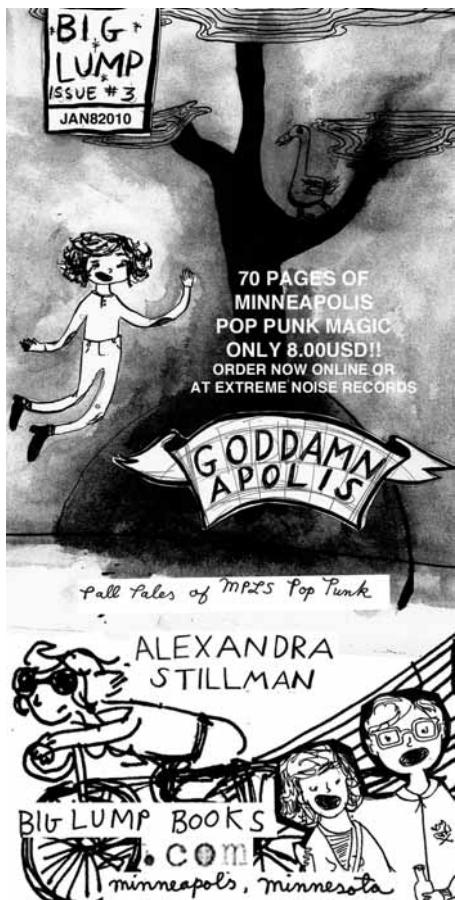
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reactionary. First, the only Christians (the context that Graham provides for his argument) that I know who won't take responsibility for their actions are, in fact, hypocrites and, in my opinion, not really Christians. Unfortunately, it seems Graham never met the right people to talk to on this issue. Second, highlighting the self is squarely in line with Gnostic Christianity and has hints of Buddhism. Finally, many major religions are returning, little by little, to the notion that nature is to be respected and revered (including a resurgence in shamanism), but Graham's depiction of the issue is that all religions are sundered from nature and ne'er shall the two meet again. Since his entire argument is predicated on the notion that all religion inherently includes "the diminishment of the self, the surrender of responsibility, and the disconnection from nature," the picture that he paints is far too broad and does not account for how the individual can, and often does, reconcile a personal investment in both the self and the world to the notion of a deity of some sort. All in all, though, I very much enjoyed *Never Kneel*. It is certainly thought-provoking and the author rightfully raises a voice against the ubiquitous hypocrisy perpetrated in the name of religion, but his discussion remains a bit short sighted, if only because of the limited context in which he explores these ideas. Nevertheless, I would love to see something more from Seth Graham on this; his account of losing his religion begs for a follow-up. —The Lord Kveldulfr (deathcultart@aol.com)

PASAZER #26,

18 złoty (about \$6.50), 8 ½" x 11", glossy hardstock print, 160 pgs. *Pasazer* has always impressed me. The entire 160 pages are all in Polish, so it feels like homework for me to read it. However, the layout and content hold the interest of all non-Polish readers I've tossed it to. This thing is packed to the gills with tons and tons of information and images. This issue interviews or highlights thirty-seven bands! Every issue highlights one pioneering punk outfit, which they call the "Mega-story." It appears to be an aid for Poles to bone up on their punk rock history. This one has the Minor Threat Megastory part two. I'm amazed to see crazy, cool old photos of them I've never seen before. They also cover many Polish and European bands along with the few big American groups. This issue contains Voodoo Glow Skulls, Star Fuckin' Hipsters, Ghost Mice, The Saints, Stiff Little Fingers, Skulls, TV Smith, Stupids, Uliczny Opryszek, Lagwagon, Ga-Ga Zielone Zabki, Unseen, Earth Crisis, Schizma, and literally dozens more! Seriously, if this quality product were produced in America, it would cost fifteen bucks, easy. I am baffled how they manage to put out such quality

at such a low price. Three cheers for *Pasazer!* ...Oh, and it also comes with two sampler CDs full of the bands mentioned. Amazing! —The Rhythm Chicken (*Pasazer*, PO Box 42, 39-201, Debica 3, Poland)

RISE AND THE FALL OF THE HARBOR AREA, THE, \$3 cash, no trades, free in L.A., 5 ½" x 8 ½", printed, 40 pgs.

Wow, this is good! I'm always impressed when regional scene zines can appeal to a reader as far away as the opposite coast. I suppose it helps that I have an awareness of San Pedro's place in punk history, given it's the birthplace of Mike Watt and the Minutemen. It also didn't hurt that I've been a long-time fan of Todd Congelliere and Recess Records, and that I appreciate good skate photography. Okay, so maybe I'm not just any random reader. Still, this zine is well done. The interviews are diverse and compelling and not just music-centric (the Shepard Fairey interview was particularly awesome). All this top-notch content is also clothed in a neat and clean layout. Check it out, even if you're not from the area. —Sean Stewart (*The Rise and the Fall*, PO Box 1794, San Pedro, CA 90733, myspace.com/riseandfall)

SICK, \$4, 5 ½" x 8 ½", perfect bound, 90pgs.

What an odd, senselessly threatening, and lovely thing these people have put together. It's never easy to confront serious illness or handicap, either in real life or in your heads. This reads as a sharp reminder of human beings' general frailty, our knife-balance of life, and fear of death (or worse). *Sick*, a collection of autobiographies by the handicapped, sick, ill, or however, strikes at you with all of that existential baggage. And it leaves you equal parts sad and hopeful, dread and soaring. Life isn't all drunken stargazing and warm socks, and it isn't all colostomy bags and mortal genetic fluctuations either. *Sick* rests comfortably in the middle. They don't want your pity; they just wouldn't mind your understanding. —Andrew Flanagan (*Microcosm*, 222 S. Rogers St., Bloomington, IN 47404)

SLASH AND BURN #666, 8 ½" x 11", 30 pgs, photocopied

A punk zine from Grand Rapids that covers the larger Michigan punk scene, both past and present that covers old school bands from there—like State, the guy from Bunny Skulls, and Vilely Ill—in addition to younger bands like Attention Span. The interviews were engaging and insightful. The older guys gave a lot of history on the area and the newer ones refreshingly brought things up to date. They also had some reprints from old fanzines of the '80s and decades of fliers. There was some

information on shady corporate beer companies that was pretty informative thrown in there, too; just pamphlet reprint stuff, but who's counting? The only thing I didn't like were the reviews, which were kind of flat. Otherwise, this was a pretty nice and very passionate scene-based zine. —Craven Rock (*Slash And Burn*, PO Box 1148, Grand Rapids, MI 49501)

STANDARD ISSUE #8, \$2.50 ppd. 8 ½" x 11", photocopied 38 pgs.

This is a zine primarily about the Ottawa, Ontario rock/punk scene, which is likely why it was sent to me to review. It is written by people who love music and love their scene a lot, which makes for some compelling articles. I especially enjoyed the wrap up of Ottawa's Gaga Weekend, but that could be because I attended a lot of shows mentioned in the article, and it was cool to read someone else's perspective on the same events. Similarly, the interviews with local bands were well done and the scene report and music reviews were fun to read. My only complaint is that when the authors stray away from musical topics, they seem to enjoy writing about barfing, penises, and who among them is "retarded." I will admit I am a decade older than most of the contributors, which could be why that non-music stuff just got a big yawn from me. However, there's lots of good stuff here, for those of us in Ottawa and elsewhere as well. —Jennifer Whiteford (standardissuemag.com)

WARNING #4, \$5, 8 ¼" x 10 ¾", offset, 36 pgs.

Glad to see one of these again. This is done by Frank, who used to do *R'lyeh Rising* (as well as play guitar in Lebenden Toten). The musical coverage is pretty much the same; the only difference is no H.P. Lovecraft references. Stark black-and-white artwork that is actually pretty good to look at, due to the excellent print job. None of that gray from a creaky xerox machine. The centerpiece of this issue is the interview with Dave "Bambi" Ellesmere, who drummed for Discharge for their *Why* 12"EP, and was also in Disgust and The Insane. There's also an exchange with Germ Attack, and a special section on a few Japanese hardcore punk bands: Acrostix, Effigy, Persevere, and Zyanose. The most interesting parts for me are the opinion pieces on the ways the government can track you via seemingly harmless technology, and the smoke and mirrors of the Democrats and Republicans and where their real interests lie. Hope there's another issue in the works, as this is a really good zine, and one I read from cover to cover a few times. —M.Avrg (PO Box 40113, Portland, OR 97240-0113)

WELCOME TO FLAVOR COUNTRY, #17, \$1 or stamps, 5 ½" x 4 ¼", copied, 23 pgs.

I really enjoy travel zines, especially when penned by people whose zines I've read before. I've been reading Kurt's zine for a while now, so I was excited to find that this issue was devoted to his five-day stay in Iceland. It was his first time out of North America, which I think made his observations even more compelling. The format is in a diary style, with dated entries. The narrative begins as he waits in the airport for his departing flight. Kurt arranged lodgings through a couch-surfing website, which seems like it led to a more authentic experience than if he'd stayed in a hotel full of other foreigners. For me, travel often brings keen insight, reflection, and a much-needed shift in perspective. Kurt definitely experiences some of this during his trip, too, and it makes for a compelling read. —Sean Stewart (Kurt Morris, 14 Taft St. #3, Dorchester, MA 02125, myspace.com/welcometoflavorcountry)

WET CEMENT, #0, No price listed, 5 ½" x 8 ½", 18 pgs.

Apparently, this is Jeff's first attempt at a zine and it's immensely better than my first attempt back in '83. *Wet Cement* is a personal zine, one that is fun to labor over, cutting and pasting words and images into something that's enjoyable to read and fun to look at. There are some top ten lists (and some bottom ten), a bittersweet story about a wedding, and a how-to guide to seasoning an iron skillet. This is a pretty good effort for a first time zine writer. I'm looking forward to more. —Steve Hart (Jeff, 56 Franklin St, Allston, MA 02134)

XEROGRAPHY DEBT, #25, \$3, 5 ½" x 8 ½", printed, 63 pgs.

Now published by Microcosm, *Xerography Debt* continues to chug along as one of only a tiny handful of print-based review zines still serving the zine community. Edited by long-time zinester Davida Gypsy Breier, the publication features letters, columns, and reviews from a revolving cast of reviewers. Because reviewers have the option of choosing what they review, there is always a certain amount of duplication in the titles reviewed. Reviews are also chiefly limited to "good reviews," which means if no one on staff likes your zine, it probably won't appear in the pages of this review zine. There is now also a blog for *Xerography Debt*, where additional reviews can be found. Nice work on the part of Davida and staff in keeping this going for so long. —Sean Stewart (Davida Gypsy Breier, PO Box 11064, Baltimore, MD 21212, xerographydebt.blogspot.com)

Hundreds more zine reviews can be found at www.razorcake.org



the bouncing souls

Ghosts on the BoardWalk

the Bouncing Souls



Ghosts on the BoardWalk

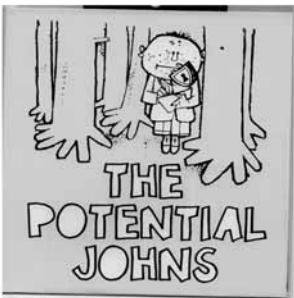
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BOOK REVIEWS



Burning Fight: The Nineties Hardcore Revolution in Ethics, Politics, Spirit, and Sound

By Brian Peterson, 500 pgs.

The 1990s were an interesting time for hardcore. It was the last period of time in which hardcore was growing and evolving and where ideas and politics were more highly regarded than your record collection. I personally don't think the decade was necessarily awesome in regards to music, but there was an undeniable spirit and push to do something that has not been around since. It was certainly more interesting than the recent—however many years of nostalgia and simulacrum—that hardcore has willingly turned into. People took a harder look at themselves and the world, figuring out ways to put their words to action and how to make hardcore a lifestyle and “more than music.” Brian Peterson wrote what is perhaps the first book to look at that decade, which may make this a touchstone in regards to any and all subsequent eventual books on that period of time.

The first half of the book gives one chapter each to the following subjects: politics and social awareness, straight edge, animal rights, and spirituality. Set up like *Please Kill Me*, the chapters and content are arranged with direct quotes from various participants in the scene. The author did a good job of balancing out the view points on each subject. There are those who were for what was happening, adding to and guiding the hot topics of the time. Then there were those who were completely against it. Others fell somewhere in the middle. The most interesting comments come from those looking back in hindsight at things that seemed so important at the time as having been blown out of proportion due to youth, emotions, and the rush of dogma.

Surprisingly, the one section I found most interesting, was the chapter on spirituality. Christianity and Krishna were the two main religions making their presence known at the time. The contrasting attitudes between the two were interesting. When people involved in Christian hardcore comment in the book, they don't shy from proselytizing, and the Krishnas simply talk about why they chose the path they did. Also, while we're on the subject, the Krishna bands were, musically, far better than the Christian bands. Listen to anything from 108, and then listen to a band like Focused. You'll go back to the 108 record.

The bands interviewed in the second half of the book are largely skewed towards straight edge, but you also get bands like Rorschach, Crudos, and Spitboy. I'm sort of baffled by the inclusion of Avail in here. Avail hardcore? Everyone has their list of bands they'd like to see in books like this. Mine would include a band like Monster X, which were a pro-legalization straight edge grind band; Dropdead, one of the more lyrically outspoken bands of that decade; and Charles Bronson, which inspired a million insipid clone bands in the following decade.

A few of the other bands interviewed here include Groundwork, Unbroken, Trial, Earth Crisis, Deadguy, Vegan Reich, Integrity, Mouthpiece, Downcast, and many more. A few are interesting, and some have nothing of note to say, which was reflected in their music and lyrics.

At 500 pages, this book is an excellent document of the decade. The words and thoughts will totally pull you in and make you think. Well worth your time and a space on your shelf. —M.Avg (Revelation, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232)

Christ: The Dark Years

By Brian D. Diederich, 112 pgs.

My guess is that anyone who's had the immense pleasure of witnessing the demonic spectacle of a Candy Snatchers show live and watched the blood spider down Larry Mays' evil cherub face with a hell-bent glint in his eyes, would estimate the degrees of separation between the Candy Snatchers and Jesus Christ to be more than the usual six. Most people would probably put that number closer to six hundred sixty-six. But, with the publication of Snatcher's bass player Brian Diederich's *Christ: The Dark Years*, there is actually little separation to speak of. But that, I suppose, depends to a great extent on how seriously one takes a book like this. I remember many years ago when those notorious leg-pullers over at *Maximum Rocknroll* tried to hoodwink their wide-eyed readership with the introduction of a supposed Christian punk columnist. Though credulity was strained to the point of emitting a massive Bronx cheer, many among the *MRR* flock took the bait like dumb carp and immediately lunched into severe spleen-venting mode. Much hilarity ensued.

My problem, if you can call it a problem, with *Christ: The Dark Years* is I don't know how seriously to take it. I'm still getting used to the idea that there exists such a thing as a Republican punk, even though the Misfits' ex-singer Michale Graves has been blowing the conservative butt horn for years now. And now you're asking me to believe in the existence of a Christian punk? It just seems too exotic a beast to really exist. Now, I know that there are plenty of middle-of-the-road George F. Babbitt types out there who go to church every Sunday who also have some Ramones, Clash, and Bowling For Soup tunes in their iPods, maybe even some hard stuff like Avril Lavigne. But I'm not talking about those types. I'm talking about a mutant strain that combines a seriously devout, theology-steeped Christian with a shit-slinging, blood-burping punk rock wildebeest. In a cartoon way, that's like imagining a cross between GG Allin and the Flying Nun.

Whatever the case, this is a strange, warty little shrew of a book. Diederich states early on “the purpose of this book is to reveal the complete story of the life of Jesus” and he purportedly goes about doing this by relying heavily on information gleaned from the hoary records of the Gnostic Gospels and by something he calls “divine revelation”—whatever the hell that is. What you wind up with is a book (which reads more like a rough draft) that's a sort of travelogue, charting Jesus' movements from region to region, as he sees the degradation of the human spirit while occasionally talking shop with various magicians, wizards, and holy men. In the process, Christ stumbles into everything from drug abuse to necrophilia rituals. And it's all presented with a strange paucity of details and a clunky level of writing hardly befitting one claiming to have degrees in philosophy and physics. Did I mention this is an odd little book?

On the positive side, there are occasional snippets of hellfire-and-brimstone baroque poetry with a nice Old Testament style gravitas: “The child of God then said, ‘If your children do not follow my word, Gargoyles will come up from Hell and lay feces, which will cause great plagues. Leper will permeate society and limbs will fall from the bodies in great numbers. Appendages will appear on the streets in large numbers. Dead bodies will be scattered all over the roadways and little children in masses will be nibbling on torsos, while cries of the dying go unheard.’”

Now that's the kind of pulpit-pounding fear-mongering twaddle that the demented Bil Keane of extreme Christian cartoons, Jack Chick, could make into a seriously deranged and wildly amusing evangelical pamphlet. Fairly juicy stuff, but there's simply not enough of it in *Christ: The Dark Years* to keep things interesting.

Maybe this queer little book really is an earnest, but clumsy, attempt to shed light on the years of Christ's life not covered in the New Testament. Or, maybe it's something more sinister, something like a flaming bag of postmodernist doggy doo set at the doorstep of the Biblical literalists. Diederich does, after all, thank Sub Genius guru Ivan Stang in the back of the book, and that might be a whopper of a clue that this book is as much a prank as anything. Or, could it be that this is, underneath all the hack writing and lumpy storytelling, actually a grimoire of Gnostic psychic techniques and magick rituals? Could it be that the pregnant allegories presented here are encrypted so that only erudite students of Gnosticism with the proper decoder ring can access the secret knowledge locked within?

Biblical hermeneutics is not my strong suit, so I'm going to take some good advice from Wittgenstein when he said, “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one should remain quiet.” It's all a mystery to me, but if you're one who was intrigued by the shadowy arcana of *The Da Vinci Code* or titillated by the hallowed gore of *The Passion of the Christ*, you might find something here to rub up against. Personally, I'd much rather spend my time listening to the decidedly decadent satan rock on *Human Zoo*. —Aphid Peewit (lulu.com/content/402723)

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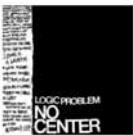
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The Fart Party: Vol. 2

By Julia Wertz

As Julia Wertz states in a disclaimer on her site, there aren't that many parties or farts in her autobiographical web comic. Do not despair kind reader, as she makes up for the lack of juvenile butt-related jokes with juvenile poop jokes, excessive drinking, and gratuitous (imagined) violence against annoying strangers. This book is the second physical collection of the web comic Wertz has published on a semi-regular basis for a few years now, of which I am a total devotee. Yes, it's rad you can just read it online (if the prospect of shelling out a couple of bucks for the antics, joys, and fuck-ups of a foul-mouthed twenty-something is too much for you, hit up the online archives), but I love having a physical, tangible thing to read in bed, leave in the bathroom (that's how I got my roommates into her work), and drop in the bath. Her work outlines the struggles of self-publishing comics, eye-humping cute guys (while being a total wuss and not talking to them), day-to-day silliness, bike rides, whiskey, and some genuinely heartfelt reflections on her childhood. The book has "bonus material," being early attempts at comicy, and some really beautifully detailed drawings from her life in San Francisco. This is a book I'd recommend to people who are

to be convicted of involvement in other murders, leading him to flee the country. He later returned to turn himself in (apparently in part to raise political awareness) and served six years in prison. Okay, so what's my point? If you're interested in reading Negri, you should probably start with *Empire* and then read this book. Be warned that if you aren't familiar with theoretical arguments about Trotsky and the struggle of Chinese proletarian groups, this book is going to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to get anything out of, or even really to understand. —Maddy (Seven Stories Press, sevenstories.com)

Make Your Place—Affordable, Sustainable Nesting Skills

By Raleigh Briggs, 124 pgs.

A nifty little book filled with DIY health and home remedies for those who may be looking to avoid spending a fortune at the supermarket and/or be more environmentally friendly. Plenty of insightful tips on first aid, body care, home and gardening, most of which I can see myself using in the future (especially when I start my garden or begin taking better care of myself, whichever happens first). This book reads like a helpful journal written by a friendly and knowledgeable guy, who I envisioned having dreads and a big beard (my apologies to Raleigh Briggs if this is not at all what you actually

"I have plenty of friends who know a ton about theoretical debates within Marxist circles, but I just don't care... what non-academic person in the United States has ever been convinced to become a leftist by an abstract theory?"

—Maddy Tight Pants, **Goodbye Mr. Socialism**

jazzed on life, but aren't afraid to make a few stupid poop jokes to make their time dealing with mundane crap easier. —Samantha Beerhouse (Atomic Books, atomicbooks.com)

Grab and Go!

By Rustin H. Wright, 36 pgs.

Subtitled, "What to bring when things go really wrong." This zine/pamphlet handbook is an extended, annotated list of things to have ready to go in case you have to leave home in an emergency. It starts with a simple "Bug out Bag," and expands to boxes and milk crates full of things to have on hand. As I read on, I pictured how much space it would take to keep all of these things ready and how they'd make your house look like a South Carolina flea market if you dumped them all out on your floor. Socks, peanut butter, first aid book, two nail clippers, chopsticks, baking soda, funnel, the largest steel bowl you have room for... Despite the cumbersome nature of the lists, the reasoning and advice offered throughout is practical and level-headed. Everything is justified. It's just hard to imagine running from a tidal wave with a backpack and half a dozen milk crates. —CT Terry (Streetcar Press)

Goodbye Mr. Socialism

By Antonio Negri, 256 pgs.

Here's a basic statement: Despite the fact that history is one of my top three interests (anything and everything, from labor battles of the 1930s to Jefferson Davis), I am not interested in political theory, critical theory, or other kinds of similar theory I don't know exist. I have plenty of friends who know a ton about theoretical debates within Marxist circles, but I just don't care. I basically dismiss the whole thing as irrelevant. I mean, what non-academic person in the United States has ever been convinced to become a leftist by an abstract theory? People care about concrete issues. That's how you organize. "You want better wages? And by the way, guess how much your boss makes? Why do you have to put up with segregation?" Am I being a bit simplistic? Probably. But here's the thing, you could spend your whole life studying this stuff and you'd have nothing to show for it.

Anyway, this book is basically an extended interview with the Italian Marxist Antonio Negri, who is best known for co-writing the book *Empire*, which I haven't read. The book basically argues (based on conversations with friends, mind you) that traditional imperialism has changed from being about individual countries into a new "empire" where power is absolute and formed in new ways: a monarchy of rich nations, a democracy (the United Nations, etc.), and corporate interests. Maybe this analysis is important to determine the most effective ways to resist, but who knows.

Interesting fact about Negri: He was accused of being involved in the assassination of the Italian politician Aldo Moro, but was acquitted, only

look like). Each page is meant to look handwritten, with clever illustrations accompanying each topic. One chapter I found to be of particular interest explained what different herbs can do for your mental and physical health. For example, licorice root can help cure hypothyroidic depression. I immediately stocked up on Twizzlers in case I ever get hypothyroidically depressed. An infinitely interesting read that could be beneficial to the reader and, on a somewhat larger scale, the planet. —Andy Conway (Microcosm Publishing, 222 S. Rogers St., Bloomington, IN 47404)

Unnatural Act, The: Rock, Rhythm and Blues in the Nam

By Robert Wehrman

The Unnatural Act is a hilariously true story of Wehrman's experiences as a sousaphone (Tuba) player during the Vietnam War. Drafted out of high school, he auditioned for the Army band and was shipped off to Vietnam, finding himself stationed in Ho Chi Minh Village.

The Army band was a small group of men who would pack into a helicopter, fly over dangerous enemy territory, and land in a so-called safe zone. Then they would form up and play the American and/or the South Vietnamese National Anthems for a visiting general or a dignitary of some sort, while standing knee-deep in a mucky field with sniper fire zipping through the trees. But the band didn't play the song straight. Instead, these accomplished musicians would play as poorly as possible; sloppily and purposely out of tune with each other. This was their way of protesting the war, right in the face of the warriors themselves.

Later on, they form a rock band and play to the grunts, grinding through the classics of the day while tripping on acid and taking out their musical frustrations with waves of distortion and off-kilter rhythms. This, in my mind, sounds like a cross between MC5 and the German band Can, with some Hawkwind thrown in for good measure.

Many books written by veterans describe their experiences as extreme boredom punctuated with moments of sheer terror. In between being forced to burn shit all day, playing a tuba while wearing an M-16, or smoking pot while lounging in treetop hammocks while the V.C. prowled below, *The Unnatural Act* vividly describes the horrific stories of friends being caught in a freak fire and being burned alive, and the omnipresent terror of RPGs rocketing into camp.

The Unnatural Act is a quick read and has the makings of a great screenplay. A first-time author, (he played keyboards with ZZ Top, studied composition with Aaron Copland, and is a professor at the University Of Hawaii Maui campus), Wehrman is liberal with his doses of humor and oddball observations of the war surrounding the band, delivering a unique twist on the Vietnam story. —Steve Hart (theunnaturalact.com)

To read more independent book reviews, go to www.razorcake.org.

DVD REVIEWS



Live at the Smell: DVD

A collection of performances at the downtown club that has become somewhat of an institution to the latest generation, thanks to its all-ages status and cool downtown alley. I've gone there to see punk rock, pop punk, and pure noise bands and had a good time, without bouncers or booze, with shitty walls and bathrooms that somehow didn't fall down, and good enough sound to have fun. Over the years, the alley and downtown in general got hipper, both within the underground rock scene and with yuppies and rave clubs down the way. I'm sure they don't call it rave anymore, but it sucks just as bad, full of soon-to-be real housewives of Orange County.

I don't know the inner workings of the Smell, as there have always been club politics ever since the Masque. This video doesn't go into that other than stating "go make some music!" This is more of a concert film with performances from The Mae Shi, Foot Village, Ponytail, Abe Vigoda, High Places, Gowns, BARR, No Age, HEALTH, and Captain Ahab. If you like those bands, you will be in

heaven. Beautiful packaging, long sets from each band, and well-recorded sound. Great shots with footage from multiple cameras and angles capturing active band and loving audience alike, keeps the video fresh.

I'm new to these bands and most of it is too ethereal and stretching to grab me. My mind drifted to the fast forward button on a couple. Mae Shi felt like the best of the wave that's breaking here, with cutesy singing and jumping, angular guitars, and peppy drums. Their energy is great, playing off the crowd and genuinely having fun with real catchy anthems. They're not trying to build a castle; they just bounce around in one onstage. Captain Ahab closes the disc with a psychotic techno smash that's awesome. Reminds me of a dream where Ted Nugent renounces his ways and picks up a laptop, trading in the whammy bar for pedals, while being reborn. –Speedway Randy (coldhandsvideo.com, thesmell.org)

My Life Is Great: The Stevie Stiletto Story: DVD/CD

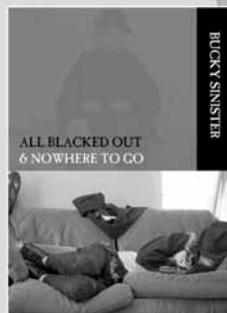
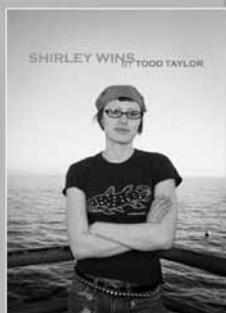
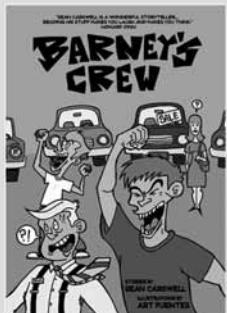
Before putting this DVD on, I was almost tempted to do a Google search on it to see if this was a Spinal Tap-esque mockumentary. It looked a little suspect, especially since the back cover describes this Stevie Stiletto character as "legendary," which I'm sure he is to someone, somewhere (quite possibly in Jacksonville, Florida, where he's from). However, *My Life Is Great: The Stevie Stiletto Story*, is a totally legit documentary. I've personally never heard of Stevie Stiletto, but I guess that's where this DVD will help out in spreading the word of his apparent legendary status.

In the wake of *Anvil! The Story of Anvil*, I'm sure we'll be seeing more documentaries about lovable loser bands or musicians that never quite got their recognition over the course of their careers. Unfortunately, this isn't quite as entertaining as the Anvil doc. For what seems like an eternity, friends and family of Mr. Stiletto share story after story about him and his years of playing "punk rock" (which sounds like Mötley Crüe, actually), and it gets dull fast. This documentary suffers from lack of video evidence as well, as there are just a lot of still photos. I completely respect Stevie Stiletto for being an old rocker dude that has stuck in there and slugged it out with life (including liver problems that almost killed him), but I was just bored by this. Comes with a CD of Stevie's music, which I rather enjoyed for its fun cheesiness. –Andy Conway (Geneva 13 Press, PO Box 13, Geneva, NY 14456)

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